

**DYNAMICS OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY IN CHINATOWN, MANHATTAN:
A POLICY ANALYSIS**

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Introduction

Restaurants in Chinatown have long been classified as part of its small businesses and studied in the sense of economic development of the neighborhood (Lin J. , 1995) (Guest, 2011) (Zhou M. &., 1989). In contrast, this paper studies the restaurant industry in Chinatown as a subject separated from other industries, emphasizing its uniqueness. It strives to explore the questions: How did Chinatown's restaurant industry evolve through history? How did the interventions from stakeholders influence the restaurants? The study aims to find a way to help Chinatown's restaurants survive against future difficulties.

For the historical part, this paper begins with a portrait of the Chinatown's restaurants amid early immigration trends. The development of the Chinatown satellites such as Sunset Park and Flushing will also be touched on since their emergence partly caused the decline of Manhattan's Chinatown. The following analysis contributes to planning theory in the understanding of the impetus and patterns that drive the evolution of ethnic enclaves.

In recent years, influences from major events such as 9/11 and Superstorm Sandy will be the focus of the study to understand how restaurants in Chinatown coped with these challenges and how they interacted with the government or other organizations. This study organizes and analyzes the numerous interventions and recommendations since 9/11. The paper also discusses several innovative business strategies initiated by the new generation of entrepreneurs. This will shed light on the question of how to rejuvenate endangered traditional businesses. Finally, as advice for the future making of related policies, this study provides recommendations for stakeholders to collaboratively create a sustainable, diverse and vibrant ecology of restaurants in Chinatown.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Background | 3 |
| Literature Review | 5 |
| Methodology | 9 |
| I. History | |
| a. Early immigration (Before 1879)..... | 11 |
| b. Chinese exclusion (1879-1965)..... | 12 |
| c. Post-1965 reform (1965-2000)..... | 24 |
| II. Challenges in the 21st century | |
| a. The 9/11 attacks..... | 37 |
| b. 2008 Lower East Side Rezoning..... | 41 |
| c. Superstorm Sandy..... | 44 |
| d. Current status of the restaurant industry in Chinatown..... | 46 |
| e. Changing local customer base..... | 54 |
| f. Customer base in the adjacent neighborhoods..... | 57 |
| g. Challenges of business practices..... | 59 |
| III. Conclusion | |
| a. Key findings..... | 61 |
| b. Existing interventions..... | 63 |
| c. Existing recommendations..... | 64 |
| d. Recommendations from this study..... | 65 |
| References | 79 |

Background

Manhattan's Chinatown has shown many faces to the American public: a popular tourist attraction, a segregated ethnic enclave, and a deteriorated, filthy slum. Prominently, its restaurant industry has intertwined with these aspects in their eye-catching signage, in every dish they prepare and serve, in the waiters' awkward English and in the late-night scene of garbage bags piling at the curbs. They create a rich experience in which all senses of the customers are stimulated. Apart from the enjoyment of taste, they make Chinatown look like Chinatown, sound like Chinatown and smell like Chinatown.

Chinatown's restaurant culture established itself more than a century ago when early generations of Chinese immigrants were working low-wage jobs across the five boroughs (Tabor, 2015). During weekends, they rushed to Chinatown's restaurants to treat themselves with hometown food to help ease the despair of exclusion and discrimination. The number of restaurants gradually grew since then with the expansion of Chinatown. In 1965, the U.S abolished the national-origin quota system that had regulated the inflow of non-European immigrants. Under the new law, twenty thousand immigrants were allowed to enter the United States annually from China (Zhou M. , 1992). Much larger groups of customers and cheaper human capital galvanized the growth of the restaurant industry. In the 1980s, the influx of foreign capital investment has helped Chinatowns to boom and has decentralized the residents and the restaurant businesses to satellite Chinatowns in other boroughs.

Chinatown became a frozen zone after 9/11, and its restaurants are among the businesses that were hit the hardest. In 2002, seventy percent of the restaurants reported a more than twenty percent decline in revenue, and thirty percent of the restaurants' employees were working reduced hours (Chinatown One Year After 9/11, 2002). There were multiple endeavors from different

stakeholders to rescue the dying businesses, though not many businesses reached out for help. In 2012, Superstorm Sandy scarred the area deeply again, with damage to the restaurants that was hard to estimate. Apart from the uncertainties, Chinatown's restaurants are subject to strong competition from those in Sunset Park and Flushing. The owners from the last generation cannot or choose not to adapt to the newly-emerged social media as an advertisement approach. Some of them even have a hard time communicating with their customers due to the language barrier. Many of them are unaware of government policies and fail to comply with the regulations. And inevitably, gentrification is already knocking on the door. Chinatown's restaurants will have to compete with high-end restaurants and chains. How can they be helped to survive all these challenges?

Literature Review

a. Introduction

Chinatown in Manhattan is an old yet constantly renewed immigrant community that has gone through many phases before reaching its mature identity. Many historians and anthropologists tend to portray Chinatown as a first stop that immigrants enter at the bottom of the society from which they pursue social mobility. Political scientists tend to view Chinatown as a site facilitating capital exploitation of cheap labor (Zhou, 1992). This literature review organizes existing academic opinions about ethnic enclaves and the factors that shaped the evolution of Chinatown. It provides a theoretical and historical context of the development of Chinatown's restaurant industry.

b. Theory of ethnic enclaves

Immigrant or ethnic enclaves are often seen as a form of segregation, an obstacle to assimilation. The classic assimilation model dating to the Chicago School in the 1920s posits that through their education and occupational achievements, immigrants can join in the socioeconomic mainstream and gain social acceptance (Brown & Bean, 2006). In this way, the ethnic sub-economy only significantly caters to the needs of new immigrants.

Contrary to this model which advocates that the immigrants should lose their cultural uniqueness and become assimilated into the U.S. society, the ethnic-cultural model adopts a pluralistic approach suggesting that there exists an acceptance or tolerance of the diversity of various immigrant groups in their modes of adaptation to the new environments. Sociologists using this approach consider ethnic communities to be a result of the immigrants' exposure to the dominant culture. "Although, over time, the immigrants and their descendants may move to a newer and better neighborhood, the original area of settlements often remains a center for ethnic stores and services and thereby a symbol of common ethnic identity" (Waldinger, 1987).

The enclave-economy model understands the ethnic enclave as a segmented sector of the larger economy. Zhou (1992) highlighted how the former generations of immigrants choose the enclave economy over the open secondary economy because the enclaves offer security and shelter against overt ethnic discrimination. Then the direction, pace, and manner in which later generations become integrated depended on the modes of adaptation and economic success of the earlier immigrants.

c. The Chinese migration and the evolution of Chinatown

The Chinatown in Manhattan started on Mott, Park (now Mosco), Pell, and Doyers Streets, east of the notorious Five Points district. Barred from the regular wage labor by nativist agitation, the Chinese who went to New York to escape xenophobic persecution in California started hand laundries and cheap ethnic restaurants as a means of survival (Benbough-Jackson & Davies, 2011). “Chinatowns were not the outgrowth of deliberate entrepreneurial initiative but an adaptive response to harsh realities in the host society and a decisive effect in their subsequent development.” (Zhou, M. & Lin, M, 2005)

The 1949 Communist take-over and the subsequent revolutions and political repression brought a huge flow of Chinese people to the U.S. The 1945 War Brides Act, and the abolishment of the national-origins quotas in 1965 reinforced the process. Lin (1998) ascribes this dynamic to the changing domestic and overseas political environment as well as the ever-growing forces of globalization. She also argues that the federal, state and municipal governments’ policies stirred the overseas capital investment in Chinatown which has led to the expansion of it to the north of Canal Street and then later the east of the Bowery.

Facing the significant growth in housing need since the 1965 Immigration and Nationalities Act and the skyrocketing rent in Manhattan of the 1980s, residents in Chinatown have been moving to

other boroughs. Poorer Chinese moved down the N, R, and D subway lines to Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Relatively wealthier Chinese migrated out to Flushing, Queens at the very last stop of the 7 Train. These areas share a pattern of “lower-density and lower-cost, outer-borough neighborhoods with shrinking white populations and good transit connections to Chinatown.” (Mangin, 2018)

From the 1980s to early 2000s, communities in the downtown Manhattan area such as Lower Manhattan, the East Village, Greenwich Village, and Tribeca have all gone through a huge wave of gentrification. Chinatown is left as the last low-income community in downtown Manhattan (Xu, 2013). Although gradual changes have been happening around it, Chinatown deserves credit for continuing to exist as an enclave for a significant low-income population despite its central location. Tabor (2015) ascribes this phenomenon to the fact that landlords (most family associations) have maintained ownership and control of the property and have refused to sell.

d. Chinatown economic development, policies and proposals

According to Lin (1995), the Chinatown economy consists of two sectors, one the garment industry, restaurants, and grocery stores, which provide jobs and services for low-income classes; and another, including international banking, and local redevelopment. The city government has generally acted in the interests of upper circuit capital, but there are some indications that it also has some interest in preserving lower-circuit activities (Lin, 1995). The dynamic between gentrification and urban redevelopment or rezoning is greatly affected by this dualism.

From 1950 to 2005, local elites used the city’s planning schemes to exoticize the Chinatown area and its residents. Umbach and Wishnoff (2008) examined three ultimately unsuccessful proposals exemplifying these “strategic self-orientalizing” endeavors: “China Village,” an urban renewal proposal (1950-1954); the Chinatown Revitalization Plan, an effort to alter Chinatown’s

streetscapes (1975); and The Unity Arch, an ornamental gate (2002-2005). The municipal government tried to impose their cultural stereotypes onto Chinatown, hoping this would attract more tourists. However, simply changing the built environment cannot satisfy prominent social needs. All these plans failed with the shortage of local support.

The Pratt Report for the Chinatown Working Group (2013) sees Chinatown's economy as "the unique symbiosis that exists between residents and local businesses, based upon employment and local purchasing, and the variety of goods and services that continue to draw visitors from all over the country." The former is currently threatened by the influx of commerce that serves a more affluent, non-Chinese population, causing displacement of local-serving business; the latter is in danger due to the dissolution of cultural identity and loss of authenticity also led by gentrification. However, this report is on a large scale that it did not pay attention to the daily operations of small businesses in Chinatown when composing its recommendations. It failed to address the seemingly trivial yet constant difficulties that small businesses have been facing.

In 2008, under the Bloomberg administration, the city initiated rezoning of parts of Chinatown, the East Village, and the Lower East Side. It intended to balance "preservation of the classic tenement-style built form in some areas" with "increased housing production and redevelopment in others" (East Village/ Lower East Side Rezoning, 2008). The New York Times (Lee, 2008) argues that rezoning shifts the high-rise development pressures from inside the protected area into the neighboring areas which are predominantly Chinese-American and Latino. The Pratt Report (2013) blames the decrease in affordable housing and increase in rent in Chinatown on rezoning. However, the Environment Impact Assessment of the East Village/ LES Rezoning addressed that even without the rezoning, more developments will still happen in the neighborhood.

Methodology

This study chooses Chinatown's restaurant industry as the representative of its small businesses because 1) as a traditional pillar industry, it symbolizes Chinatown's identity; 2) it constitutes a large portion of employment in Chinatown, and 3) it is very sensitive to policy changes. The study looks at the past and present of Chinatown's restaurant industry and discusses its future possibilities using qualitative and quantitative methods.

In the first section, this study investigates the early years of (pre-9/11) Chinatown's restaurant industry and how it plays a role in the evolution of the neighborhood. The analysis incorporates historical archives of reports, newspapers, journals and official documents. Descriptions of the restaurant industry will be extracted from the materials and organized into an explicit timeline referenced with the major events that caused the changes such as the early persecution of Chinese in California, the Chinese Exclusion Act and the repeal of it, the migration to the satellite Chinatowns (Sunset Park in Brooklyn and Flushing in Queens), and others.

Particular attention is paid to the more recent status of the restaurant industry in Chinatown. Again, impacts of major events on restaurants are evaluated, and the effectiveness of interventions are discussed. These events include the 9/11 attack, 2008 Lower East Side Rezoning, Superstorm Sandy, and others. After that, the quantitative method is introduced to portray the current status of Chinatown's restaurant's industry. The study utilizes data from two major resources: Reference USA and Yelp. com.

Reference USA acquires and maintains its business data by having short phone interviews with business owners. Through its frequent verification and documentation, a wide range of latest business information is available to the public. Its limitation lies in its self-report scheme, making it possible for the business owners to describe the business condition falsely. This study organizes

and visualizes Reference USA data into maps and graphs to show the geographical distribution, the size (in terms of employment, square footage and sales), the expenses (rent, payroll and benefits, utilities, and others) of the restaurants in Chinatown, and the results are compared to the restaurants in Flushing.

Yelp is the largest interactive online business review platform. It also provides much business information useful to customers. Therefore, Yelp data is ideal for analyzing more detailed business practices of restaurants in Chinatown. This study creates a measurement of “business practice score” synthesizing the rating, the number of reviews, whether the business is claimed on Yelp, health score, and whether the business accepts credit cards. The average score of Chinatown’s restaurants is compared to the one of Flushing’s restaurants. The revealed problems are then analyzed. However, there are many “mom-and-pop” restaurants in Chinatown that provide great food and service to their customers, especially the locals. They will have low scores with these criteria because they do not accept credit cards and their regular customers do not leave reviews on Yelp.

As part of the qualitative study, interviews with stakeholders are conducted to investigate people’s opinion on the topic. Several restaurant owners of old and young generations are interviewed about the challenges of their daily operation, their feedback of the past institutional interventions and what kind of assistance they need the most currently. Among these interviewed restaurant owners, the more successful ones would be asked about their business strategies and their opinions on Chinatown’s restaurant industry. This study also acquires input from elected officials, local organizations and community leaders. The interventions in Chinatown’s restaurant industry will be the focus of these interviews.

I. History

a. Early immigration (Before 1879)

In 1850s, Chinatown in New York City started as the result of the long-lasting exclusion of Chinese immigrant workers on the West Coast of the U.S. The California gold rush brought the Chinese to this strange continent with the rosy picture of plenty of gold to bring home.

Subsequently, there was more Chinese labor imported for the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. China at that time was experiencing the decadence of the Qing Dynasty where the economic situation pushed people abroad for a more stable and affluent life. As the Chinese community grew in California, Chinese enclaves developed in major cities such as San Francisco.



Figure 1 A caricature of a Chinese worker wearing a queue an 1899 editorial cartoon titled "The Yellow Terror in All His Glory"

In 1850, American miners pressured the California legislature into enacting a monthly tax of \$20 on all miners who were not United States citizens. Thousands of foreigners were forced to leave the goldfields: the tax was far more than they could pay ("The Land of Gold and Hope"). The former Chinese miners soon took on other lowest-paid jobs. It was taken for granted by white people that the Chinese were dragging down the wage levels. Prejudice towards them widely

existed in public opinion and political propaganda. They were called the “yellow peril,” the “Chinese menace,” and the ‘indispensable enemy.’ The “Chinese quarters” were considered awfully detrimental to the “health of society” by a widely-circulated report from the San Francisco Board of Health who strongly advocated for a “thorough removal” of the Chinese enclave ("Removing the Nuisance, the Anxiety of San Francisco," "3 Mar 1880, - The New York Times", p. 5). The anti-Chinese anger eventually culminated in a campaign slogan, “The Chinese must go!” by the workingmen’s party in California.

b. Chinese exclusion (1879-1965)

1. The Chinese Exclusion Act

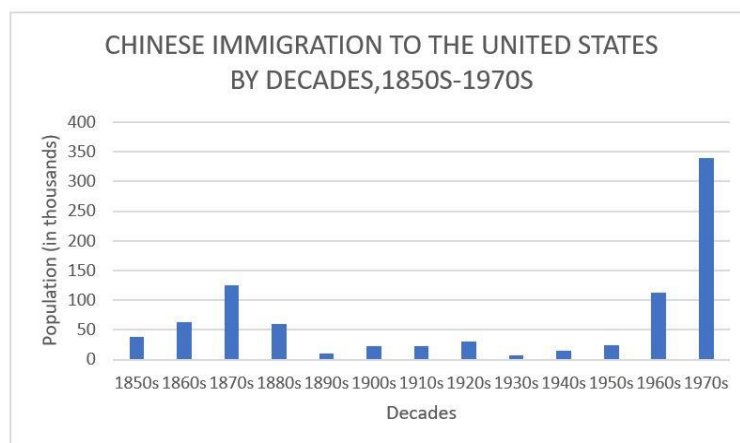


Figure 2 Source: INS Statistical Yearbook: 1986

In 1879, California adopted a new constitution authorizing the state government to determine which individual was allowed to reside in the state and banned the Chinese from employment by corporations and state, county or municipal governments (Matthews, Szalai, & Flaherty, 2016). In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. For the first time, Federal law proscribed entry of an ethnic working group on the premise that it endangered the good order of certain localities (“Documents - Chinese Exclusion

Act (1882)"). Chinese immigrants admitted to the U.S. (61,711) decreased by 50 percent from the previous decade (123,201) (Zhou, 1992). The strict quota did not relax until the 1940s.

A large portion of Chinese immigrants that could not afford to travel back to China took advantage of the Transcontinental Railroad (completed in 1896) to discover a new world on the East Coast. Chinatowns started to emerge in New York, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. However, no matter where the Chinese immigrants lived in the U.S., they were inevitably the target of exploitation and social injustice.



Figure 3 The Early Boundaries of Chinatown

The first use of the word “Chinatown” was by the New York Times in 1880 (“With the Opium Smoker, a Walk Through the Chinese Quarter,” “22 Mar 1880 - The New York Times”, p. 3) describing an area located on the east side of Lower Manhattan, between Mott, Pell, and Doyers Street. An 1870 census shows there were only 23 Chinese people living in New York City. But the number increased to 120 in 1872, 853 in 1880, 2,559 in 1890, and 6,321 in 1900 (Chinese

Consolidated Benevolent Association Website). They were active in lines of business such as laundry, cigar and tobacco sales, groceries and restaurants. As an increasing amount of Chinese immigrants from the West Coast settled here, Chinatown expanded to Mulberry, Elizabeth, and Bayard around the 1900s. This remained roughly the border of Chinatown until the 1960s due to the immigration restriction set by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

Chinese immigrants successfully integrated into marginal economic activities. The restaurants in Chinatown at that time were small tea shops and eateries mostly catering to the need of Chinese immigrants. The Chinese bachelors who left their families behind had to work all the time that they were too exhausted to cook for themselves. They became the customer base of the first generation of restaurants in Chinatown.

2. Chong Wah Gong Shaw

Since the 1880s, Chong Wah Gong Shaw, the ancestor of New York's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association imposed significant influence on Chinatown and its businesses. It was considered the earliest organized social institution of Chinese Americans, starting in San Francisco and expanding to New York City with the immigration flow. Although it was more of a free gathering of the leading merchants than a formal organization with specific plans, the "Mayor" of Chinatown (elected by the members of Chong Wah Gong Shaw) had great authority, especially over local commerce. For example, Chong Wah Gong Shaw required all Chinese business transactions to be conducted at the association headquarters at 16 Mott Street for a fee of five dollars each. Not only did the organization receive revenue from this process, but also, they kept records on Chinatown's businesses which further strengthened their control over the community.

It was necessary for the local merchants to have a good relationship with the organization because of its influence infiltrated all aspects of a business. If a merchant came to New York's Chinatown in the late 19th or early 20th century, with sufficient funds and an intention to open a restaurant, their first step would be visiting the headquarter of Chong Wah Gong Shaw. The merchant would be assigned a location for the business (the organization was a big landlord in Chinatown, and they had an influence over other landowners such as the Family Associations), and would be introduced to the local merchants and provided with important information (i.e. laws and regulations) about running a restaurant in New York's Chinatown. Chong Wah Gong Shaw would also provide loans to the merchant. After everything was settled, the restaurant owner needed to pay dues regularly to the organization, which would also resolve his disputes with other business owners.

Chong Wah Gong Shaw reflected the hierarchical nature of Chinese society as it adapted to a new host society. It was unauthorized power, unrecognized by the city, and had no legal status under any American law, so in its early form, it mostly failed to communicate the needs and pursuits of the Chinese immigrants to the larger society. What is more, Chong Wah Gong Shaw was a unification of the local elites. Participation of lower-income people was very limited (mostly they were just forced to pay fees to the organization). The decisions made by the organization would probably prioritize the benefit of its members over small business owners. However, it should not be ignored that the social services and business assistance Chong Wah Gong Shaw provided and the social and political stability it maintained contributed to the early local economy of Chinatown to a great extent.

3. Becoming a major tourist attraction

The early development of Chinatown's restaurant industry was closely related to the nature of Chinatown as an ethnic enclave. The enclave provides convenience for its members that the larger society fails to offer. Zhou (1992) summarized three primary functions of early ethnic enclaves. First, they were originally residential shelters isolated from the hostile society; second, they served as an economic base where the workers could earn just enough to keep alive their hopes and guarantee their acquiescence to the system, and third, they functioned as social centers for support that gave the workers in an alien environment the illusion of home. The sub-economic entity of the enclave, housing market, capital market, and labor market enabled its members to avoid competition and elimination by other more privileged groups and avoid the hardships of assimilation to the outside world. In this way, the Chinese immigrants segregated themselves both compulsorily and voluntarily.

The first few decades since the 1870s was a relatively simple time for Chinatown's restaurants in case of customer group, as they mainly served the Chinatown locals on a regular basis. Their goal was to create a familiarity that acted as an escape from everything frustrating. Though being limited by ingredients and facilities, the Chinese cooks tried to make their food resemble the one back in Canton. At the same time, the revenues were limited because the eateries were not able to charge a high price from the local workers, so they were small in scale, basic in decoration, and simple in food.

This situation soon changed, marked by the debut of the Port Arthur Restaurant in 1897. It was the largest restaurant in New York's Chinatown so far and stayed open in the same location for 85 years. The restaurant was located on the second and third floors of 7-9 Mott Street. The entrance was an awning in ornate pagoda-style, and the Chinese pagoda-style balcony would

eventually become a desirable location to watch the bustle of the Lower East Side from. The furnishings were inlaid pearl mahogany tables, teakwood chairs, ornate wood carved panels, windscreens, lanterns, chandeliers and a baby grand piano. (“The Port Arthur Restaurant, Mott Street, New York City”). The second floor was open to the general public, while the third was a labyrinth of dining rooms dedicated to private banquets, mainly weddings, birthdays, and funerals (Staff, 2016). It was also the first Chinese restaurant in New York City to obtain a liquor license, aimed at attracting both the wealthy Chinese and non-Chinese.

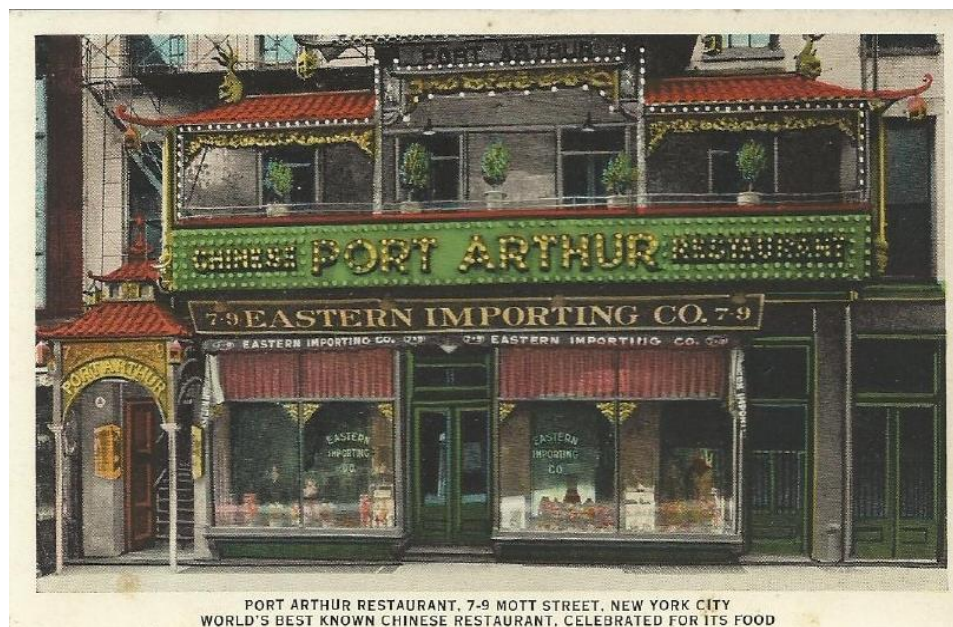


Figure 4 Facade of the Port Arthur Restaurant

The streetscape of Chinatown that is familiar to us today has gradually formed since the late 19th century. Compared to the Chinatowns of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Vancouver, there was not a large-scale architectural rebuild of Chinatown in New York City according to people's common perception of the Chinese heritage or culture. The reasons behind will be demonstrated in the coming sections. But at small scales, Chinese business owners seeking to capitalize upon the growing tourist trade have always been constructing a popular oriental look of their businesses.

By the day the brilliantly-colored signs hanging from the fronts of the Chinese restaurants and shops, give the place a festive air, while at night the vari-colored lamps and lanterns in front of the restaurants remind you of Aladdin and other charms of the Arabian Night.

("A Popular Place," "5 Feb 1899, 27 - The Buffalo Times", p. 27)



Figure 5 Pell Street, circa 1899. (Scott Buyenlarge/Getty Images)

Chop suey, once a signature cuisine of Chinatown, more American than oriental, is all the tourists ever saw of Chinatown. Meat, egg, and vegetables are cooked quickly and often served with rice. It was said to be invented during the construction of the Transcontinental Railway when fresh food was unavailable, and savvy Cantonese cooks used canned food, dried seafood, and local vegetables to simulate their home food. Subsequently, they reformulated the recipe to cater to the taste of Westerners in Chinese restaurants. Almost all early Chinese restaurants in North America served chop suey. It was the first impression of Chinese cuisine.

4. Slumming Fad

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, New Yorkers fell for an activity called “Slumming” that brought prosperity for the restaurant industry in Chinatown. Allegedly, in its hidden spots, under proper escort, one could see different things, things supposed to conflict with

the law and only visible to those “picked for the privilege.” Propaganda depicted Chinatown as a filthy place with gambling, prostitution, opium smoking, and gunfights. Calculating businessmen who saw an opportunity in people’s curiosity made up stories and set up false scenes to deceive their customers. The press exaggerated the situation deliberately to catch attention. For example, locals in Chinatown usually smoked tobaccos through pipes, yet it was being interpreted as smoking opium. The weak voice of the Chinese American community in the public arena exacerbated the misconceptions.

A visitor to Chinatown to-day may see in the bend of Doyer street the spot where the theater was until closed by the police after a gang killed a member of the Lee family. Then, too, he can visit the joss house and there buy punk in fancy red wrappings and pay three times what it is worth.

("Chinatown of the Present, a Sad Shadow From the Past," "27 Jan 1918, - New York Herald" p.50).



Figure 6 Blue Line Sight Seeing tour guide Louis Cooper leads a group tour of Chinatown, 1940 - 1949. (Seymour Wally/NY Daily News/Getty Images)

During this period, Chinatown and its people were portrayed as even worse than before. The restaurant industry became a sad affiliation of the vice industry that attracted customers by demonizing its culture and identity. The existing descriptions of the restaurants in Chinatown

during the “slumming period” were strongly biased because of that. However, many complaints were worth looking at. Most of all, the prices of food and drinks were found “especially high” by critics.

It did not take the restaurant proprietors long to find out that one slumming party would spend more money in their places in an hour than their regular customers would spend all day and they were not slow to take advantage of their opportunities.

Rice wine, which normally sold for 5 or 10 cents for a small bowl, could be served to the slumming parties for 15 or 20 cents as an extremely rare drink. There is not much for a slumming party to see in New York’s Chinatown, and it has been customary for these visitors to wind up the evening in a Chinese restaurant and imagine that they had been “very bohemian.

(" New York's Chinatown," "8 Aug 1900, 10 - The Buffalo Commercial" p.10)

The first golden age of the restaurants came as Chinatown opened to the rest of New York in a certain meaning as an “exotic slum.” Ethnicity became a capital from which people could profit. But the image that Chinatown's restaurants took advantage of the tourists prevailed through time. Instead of focusing on increasing the quality of food and service, the restaurant owners decided to squeeze as much as they could from a single visit of uptowners. Running a small restaurant with so many competitors in an unfriendly social environment was difficult. But in the long run, this kind of behavior was unsustainable and almost self-destructive because the same customers seldom came back

5. Branching out

Chinese cuisine became a trend early in the 20th century. As there was a considerable profit in it, the Chinese restaurants have branched out at a great speed. In order to get a good meal of chop suey, New Yorkers did not have to go to Chinatown. Chinese restaurants for American patrons spread all over the city.

In 1940, Lum Fong, a successful immigrant entrepreneur who owned a large Chinese restaurant of that name on Canal Street, opened a branch on 52nd Street. Its endeavors to create a unique dining experience for customers are inspiring even for today. Unlike other Chinese restaurants simply

providing knives and forks to non-Chinese diners, Lum Fong gave chopstick lessons every day at lunch. Chrysanthemum tea was introduced to patrons as a soothing beverage with the benefit of relieving laryngitis, and their famous egg-roll was also a major attraction. Many celebrities patronized Lum Fong (they were offered their own personal chopsticks), and their visits were read about in newspapers. Their fantastic food and service kept a group of regular customers, while their marketing campaign constantly drew new ones. Lum Fong pioneered a new business model which balanced cultural authenticity with an appeal to the general population. In just five years their business expanded again to a third location on 66th Street.



Figure 7 Interior of Lum Fong on 52nd Street

Though facing strong competitors from outside, the relatively small Chinatown restaurants continued to profit as Chinatown remained a popular tourist attraction. There was still something unique about Chinatown that one could not find elsewhere. For example, the festive celebration of Chinese New Year which gradually increased in scale, helped to brand and market the restaurant businesses of Chinatown.

Lucky indeed is the tourist who can witness Chinese New Year doings. Tongmen rear and wheel in dragon heads and dragon tails. Firecrackers sputter over the din of the tom-toms and in mystic bedlam. From the window balconies of Mott and Pell streets, tongmen throw little red-wrapped packages of money for charity as well as for little slant-eyed children.

("It's the Year 4641 Now," "17 Feb 1937, - Dunkirk Evening Observer," p.6)

6. The aftermath of World War II and "China Village"

In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was repealed by the Magnuson Act followed by the War Brides Act of 1945. Chinese immigrants could finally become naturalized U.S. citizens as well as reunite with their families in the U.S. Chinese immigrants continuously accepted the idea of spending a life permanently here as the discrimination weakened in American society somehow (partly because China was an ally of the U.S. during the World War II). The former "sojourners" transformed into "settlers." The following wave of Chinese immigrants after the war intended to find a home rather than to sojourn in the U.S (Zhou, 1992). However, as China was isolated under the Communist regime, very few Chinese were able to make use of these Acts for they could not get an exit permit from the Chinese state.

Meanwhile, the Chinese elites became part of New York's political actors. New York City's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) (formerly Chong Wah Gong Shaw) was at its most active since its inception. It served as the umbrella organization for Chinatown's leading mutual aid and fraternal societies. As a long-standing quasi-governmental entity in the Chinese community, it supported the Chinese businesses by providing information, loans and training. After Chinatown was declared a slum by the State Commission on Housing for its crumbling infrastructure and troubling economic situation in 1950, CCBA began diligently lobbying for a plan called "China Village" which offered restaurants, tea-shops, stores and apartment buildings with "authentic" Chinese architectural details.

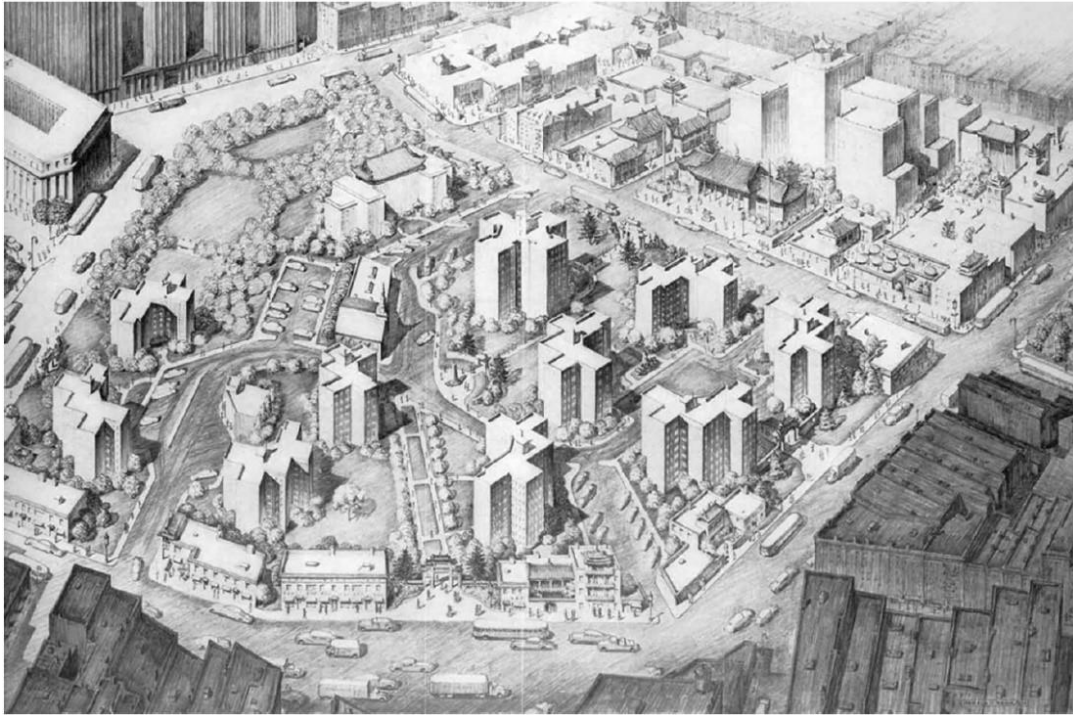


Figure 8 A panoramic view of China Village.

Source: From New York State Division of Housing's Annual Report, 1951

Deeply rooted in the international politics between China and the U.S., CCBA suffered a major blow when Chiang Kai-shek and his army was defeated by Mao Zedong in 1949. It took the new wave of urban renewal as an opportunity to regain its authority in both Chinese and non-Chinese society. Not only could they benefit greatly from transferring real estate to the state, but also they could advise the government on the relocation process.

The plan was based on the common perception that symbolic images of ethnic identity and history can produce a narrative that encourages the consumption of ethnic products and stimulates the enclave economy. After the slum clearance of the neighborhood, the plan would supposedly transform Chinatown into a global tourist attraction as well as create housing for veterans. The practice failed due to political disputes as did many urban renewal projects at Robert Moses's time. As the first large-scale planning intervention attempted in Chinatown, "China Village" was fundamentally a top-down decision that did not take the residents' opinions into consideration. It

prioritized the perceptions of people outside Chinatown over those of the locals. The questions remained: What is the identity of Chinatown and who represents it?

c. Post-1965 reform (1965-2000)

1. The influx of Chinese immigrants

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, a.k.a. the Hart-Celler Act abolished the national origins quota system that had structured American immigration policy since the 1920s, replacing it with a preference system that focused on immigrants' skills and family relationships with citizens or residents of the U.S. Numerical restrictions on visas were set at 170,000 per year, not including immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (“U.S. Immigration Legislation: 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (Hart-Cellar Act),”)

After the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the normalization of the China-U.S. diplomatic relationship in 1979, China slightly relaxed the restrictions on immigration to the U.S. Immigration with the purpose of family reunification became more flexible for humanitarian reasons. With an annual quota of twenty thousand (not including family immigrants), the U.S. ended up as the largest receiver of Chinese immigrants. With the impetus of the damaged domestic economy and unstable political environment in China, and the attraction of an abundance of high-paying jobs that the Chinese immigrants were made aware of, they came to explore a new world with their American Dreams.

In the 1970s, the Chinese population admitted to the U.S. reached 154,957, 41 percent higher than the 1960s (U.S. Census of Population: 1960 and 1970). Around eighty percent of the population of New York City’s Chinatown in 2000 had arrived during the period between the 1970s and the

2000s. As the Journal News put it, “this is one of the oldest Chinese American communities but at the same time one of the youngest (“Chinatown,” “5 Jun 1988, - The Journal News” p. 87)”.

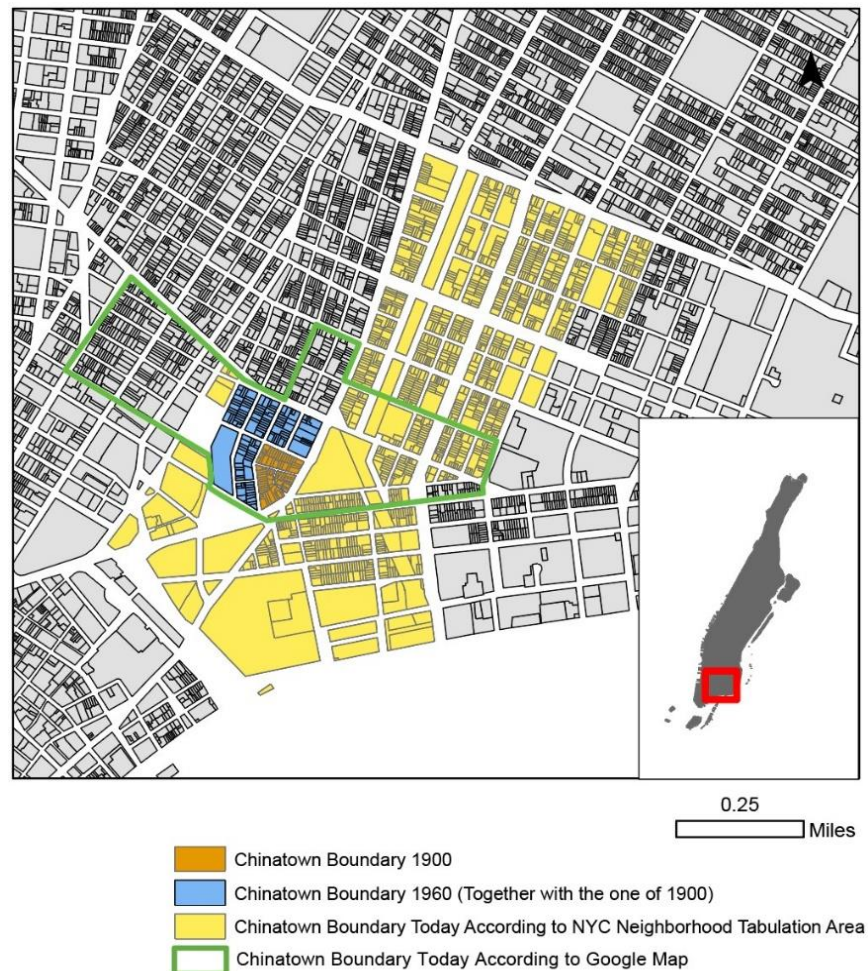


Figure 9 Chinatown's Later Expansion

The result was a significant expansion of Chinatown’s territory. In the 1970s, there was an estimation of 10,000 to 15,000 Chinese newcomers to New York City every year (Department of City Planning, 1976). In 1970, there were 69,324 Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants residing in New York City according to the U.S. Census, accounting for 0.9 percent of the city’s total population. 24,000 of these settled in the large Chinatown area which included East Broadway, Chatham Square, and the Bowery. Two-thirds of the residents live in the historic core of

Chinatown. New York's Chinatown surpassed San Francisco's in population and became the largest one in the United States ("Chinatown – The Peopling of New York").

Before World War II, Chinese immigrants primarily came from Canton and Hong Kong, so the restaurants were mostly in Cantonese style. The Cantonese culture still dominates New York's Chinatown today, but the proportion of immigrants from other parts of China and South-East Asia is growing rapidly. The Vietnam War brought ethnic Chinese refugees from the Mekong Delta to the neighborhood. The relatively skilled and more affluent Hong Kongese and Taiwanese came in since the late 1960s. But by far the largest groups of immigrants came in the 1980s from Fujian, a southeastern province along the sea. Speaking a completely different dialect from the Cantonese, they remained somewhat independent from the earlier Cantonese immigrants. The small businesses of the Fujianese soon emerged on East Broadway, replacing old ethnic Jewish stores. The Fuzhouese restaurants, mostly characterized by light sauces and fresh preparations, served particularly cheap dumplings and noodles to low-income workers in Chinatown.

At the same time, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), the pro-Taiwan Cantonese faction, which had ruled Chinatown politics for more than a hundred years, lost its dominance as the immigration trend changed. The sub-organizations of CCBA such as the Chinese American Restaurant Association and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York became less and less active in their fields.

After many decades of backing the Taiwan Government against the Communist Government in China, the community has adopted a more sympathetic attitude toward the mainland. Along with that, instead of looking for direction to Mott Street, where the Cantonese-led benevolent association is based, it now looks to the Bowery, where the United Chinese Associations of New York, its pro-China counterpart, is based, and East Broadway, where a number of Fujianese associations have their headquarters.

(Lii, 1997)

Since the 1970s, influenced by the civil rights movement, ambitious young Chinese-Americans graduated from college, returned to Chinatown, and started not-for-profit organizations to offer free assistance without the political baggage attached to CCBA. These include the Asian American Legal Defense Fund, Asian Americans for Equality, Chinese-American Planning Council and others. Many of them have been helping small businesses adapt to the changing regulatory and tax environment and assisting with business strategies and marketing.

2. Development Constraints

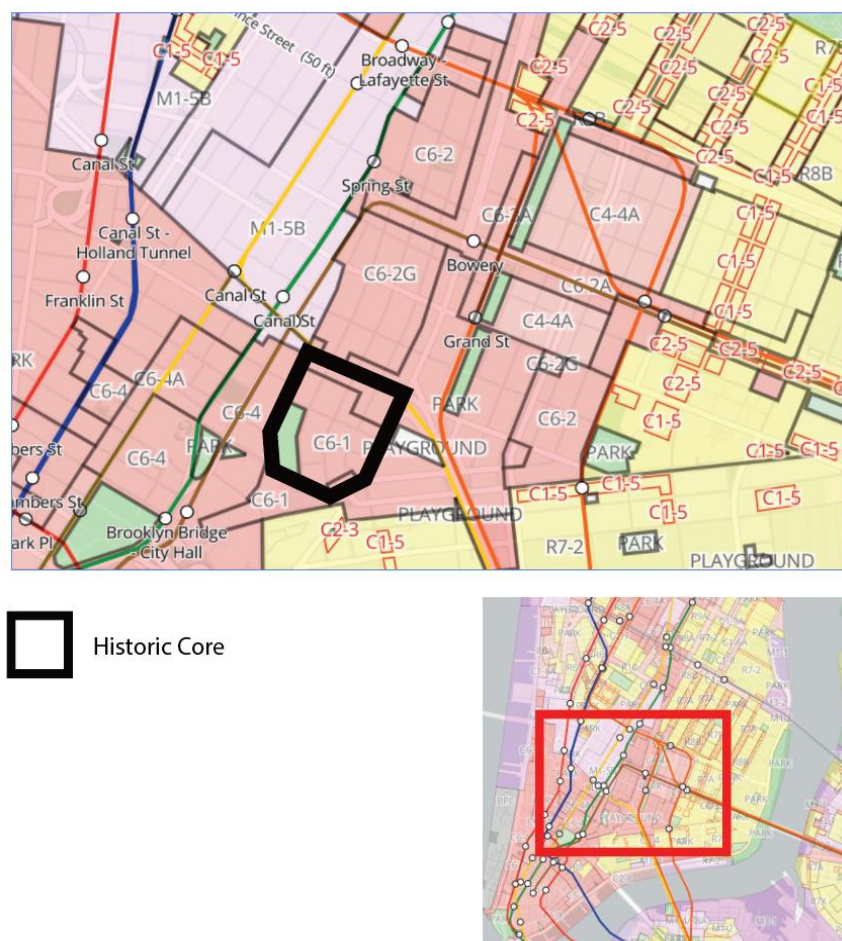


Figure 10 Zoning districts in Chinatown

In the 1860s when Chinatown was founded, Lower East Side was a hub for poor immigrants from many places around the world. Around a century later, Chinatown is in the midst of the most valuable real estate, but its economic power is insufficient to overcome the high rent in the

Financial District, Tribeca, East Village, and other surrounding neighborhoods. Chinatown's current boundary is unlikely to further expand due to its unique location and the associated development constraints.

Chinatown's built form varies to a great extent. Its historic core is filled with walk-up apartment buildings erected in the early 20th century with commercial use at the bottom while Bowery has been occupied by new hotels, office buildings and luxury apartment buildings. Since Chinatown can neither expand horizontally nor vertically in the majority of areas, housing for low- or moderate-income population is a rare resource in the area. Overcrowding is endemic in Chinatown in the 1990s with stories of 20 people in a 200 sqft room, sleeping in shifts, or basements illegally sub-divided to house dozens of families (Kwong). The obsolete infrastructures of most housing are also worrisome.

Mangin (2018) attributed this dilemma to the lack of political power, arguing that there is no strong collective effort to upzone Chinatown for more housing. He pointed out that most Chinatown residents are not naturalized thus cannot vote. In the 1990s, when Chinatown was at or near peak population of around 100,000 Chinese, it had fewer than 10,000 voters (Jacobs, 1996). Although, this changed when Margaret Chin, a descendant of Hong Kongese immigrants was elected as the City Council Member, the controversial modification of zoning in Chinatown did not substantialize. On the one hand, more affordable housing created by the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Program could largely benefit the locals especially the vulnerable groups such as the seniors. On the other hand, stakeholders are concerned that even more gentrification would be brought to Chinatown by the rezoning. Instead of pushing for a large-scale rezoning, many Chinese immigrants simply find homes in satellite Chinatowns. Meanwhile, even more of them nowadays disperse around the city instead of clustering in an enclave.

3. Inflated capital and land market

Starting in the 1970s, Lower Manhattan capital and real estate markets grew significantly. Stimulated by globalization, a large flow of foreign capital poured into the area. As an enclave with strong cultural and social affiliations in the most established international, commercial and financial center around the world, New York's Chinatown became the ideal destination for investment. Wealthy merchants in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia transferred their capital in the form of real estate development to the area. During the five years from 1970 to 1974, land values in Chinatown increased 34 percent, while building values increased 24 percent (at \$62 to \$210 per square foot, comparable to the properties in Midtown) (Lii, 2015). During the 1960s and the 1970s, the family associations collectively bought up about sixty buildings in Chinatown's historical core: Mott, Pell and Bayard streets, and has owned them since then.

The single most dramatic gain occurred at Chatham Square, where old-law tenements were demolished to clear a site for Confucius Plaza. It was not easy, though, for other large-scale urban redevelopments in old Chinatown because of rent control and zoning regulations. Small investors were also part of the game, buying up properties in neighborhoods around Chinatown. Due to the political intention behind the capital flow, profits seldom returned to the origin. They were often refilled to the Chinatown area, strengthening its economy efficiently.

According to the Chinatown Street Revitalization Report done in 1975 by the Department of City Planning, 94 percent of merchants at that time were renters. The reported rents ranged from less than \$ 0.5 per sqft per month (or \$6 per sqft per year) to \$4.27 per sqft per month (or \$51 per sqft per year). One would imagine that the restaurants at that time started to have difficulties keeping up with the rising rent.

4. Chinatown Street Revitalization

In 1975, as part of the effort to stimulate the city's declining tourism industry, the plan of revitalizing Chinatown's streetscape was brought up by the Department of City Planning (DCP). DCP initiated the Chinatown Improvement Committee, in collaboration with Manhattan Community Board 3, the Economic Development Administration, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA, consisting of 59 family associations at that time), the Chinatown Planning Council, other local organizations, elected officials, businessmen and a cross-section of civic leaders.

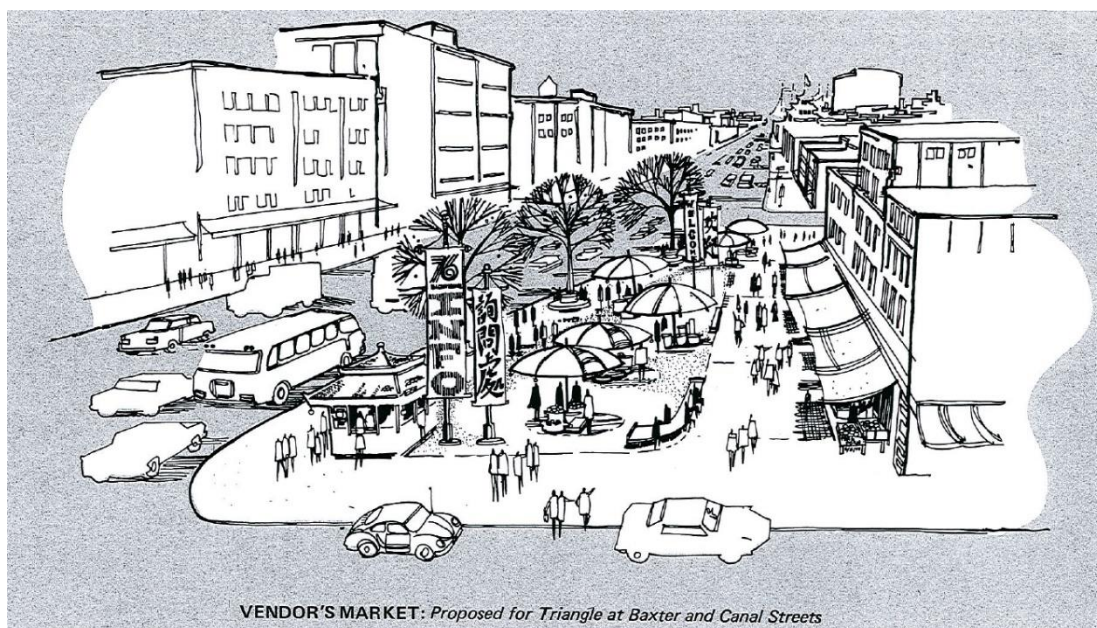


Figure 11 Illustration from the Chinatown Street Revitalization Report

The report produced indicated that the newcomers were applying pressure on the physical and social structure of Chinatown, and that overcrowding had become the major issue. The project's goals were to 1) improve the quality of the street environment with an emphasis on pedestrian movement, safety and over-all cleanliness; 2) provide space for cultural events and art objectives which enhance street life and enrich leisure opportunities for residents and visitors; 3) regulate traffic flow and achieve a degree of separation between cars and pedestrian for efficiency and

safety; and 4) sketch and dramatize the historic heritage of Chinese-Americans and Chinatown. Similar to the “China Village” plan, the Chinatown Street Revitalization plan advocated for redeveloping several parts of the neighborhood with oriental-looking facades, and street kiosks and parks decorated with “Chinese-style” elements.

The plan did not materialize because the property owners failed to reach an agreement despite the unremitting mediation of the CCBA. The study took the improvement of the physical environment as a “cure-all,” thinking the benefit created by the thriving tourism could automatically filter down to the residents. It was a typical example of the “city as a growth machine” way of thinking that was prevailing at the time, which avoided addressing social inequality. There was no institutional effort to accommodate local people’s perception of their own identity and culture heritage. Instead, the city and many Chinatown’s merchant elites kept trying to impose the long-lasting, well-accepted stereotype based on ethnic tourism to the neighborhood. As Umach and Wishnoff (2008) put it, what had been icons of a profitable exoticism to the merchants who erected them became embarrassing relics to a new generation with job prospects beyond the tourist trade.

5. Diversifying restaurants

The economic boom in New York City’s Chinatown produced plenty of opportunities for immigrant workers and restaurant owners. The 1988 Chinese Business Guide and Directory listed 1,150 restaurants in New York City which employed around 15,000 workers, mostly male. The existing restaurants that time could be categorized as tea and coffee houses, fast-food takeouts, and expensive restaurants.

The tea and coffee houses clustered in Chinatown in Manhattan. They originated from the old Chop Suey House or Rice Shop Kitchens from fifty years ago with simple interiors and cheap food. The owners and employees tended to have limited English proficiency, and their menus were

written in Chinese. The take-out business catered to both Chinese and non-Chinese. The start-up investment and operating cost of both types of restaurants were quite low, creating a low access threshold for entrepreneurs with scarce resources. However, to profit by this business model required a considerable and constant volume of customers.

The luxury Chinese restaurants served for family-gathering, banquets, and festive occasions. The restaurants specialized in cuisines from different parts of China reflecting the regional immigration trends-Shanghai, Canton, Sichuan, Hunan, and so on. Authenticity was emphasized and appreciated by both Chinese and non-Chinese customers.

The customer group of Chinatown's restaurants has evolved to be what it is today: Chinatown locals who seldom went outside their familiar neighborhood; office workers from the Civic Center who were a five minute walk away; tourists from other cities and other countries; New Yorkers who were interested in Chinatown's unique food and lively street life; and Chinese who lived elsewhere but did most of their shopping in the Chinese markets.

6. Restaurant hiring crisis

For many employees, Chinese restaurants were complexes of kinship obligation. In this sense, Chinese restaurant workers were, to a great extent, sacrificing themselves for the sake of kinship they valued while the employer was exploiting their labor. In other cases, the restaurant owners hired exclusively ethnic laborers to reduce payroll cost and avoid lawsuits (with limited resources of information and funds, it was extra difficult for the Chinese restaurant employees to seek for legal assistance when being treated unfairly). Wing Lam, a 32-year old immigrant from Hong Kong, began as a waiter in New York's Chinese restaurants in 1967. He worked more than sixty hours a week and took home \$128 a month. He later became an advocate for minimum wage in Chinese restaurants ("Chinese Waiters: Turning the Table," "19 Aug 1981, Daily News" p.13).

Local 6 of the Hotel, Restaurant, Club Employees and Bartenders Union, the big outfit that represented most of the organized waiters in Manhattan (it unionized 35 percent of all restaurants in 1981) could not prevail in Chinatown. In 1981, only six Chinese restaurants were Local 6 shops ("Chinese Waiters: Turning the Table," "19 Aug 1981, Daily News" p.13). At that time, many restaurant employees in Chinatown did not know "minimum wage." Scared of being fired if they tried to negotiate the wage with their boss, the restaurant employees remained unorganized and silent for decades.

In the 1980s, the force of unions was largely strengthened by the push of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association and which acted as an agent between restaurant owners and unions. Its dark side gradually revealed as several restaurants that could not afford the compensation of lawsuit ran out of business, causing dozens of their workers to lose their jobs. In 1995, Chinatown's only unionized restaurant, Silver Palace, filed for bankruptcy facing \$1.5 million in compensation and back wages. The union charged that the restaurant's management violated labor laws by trying to bargain illegally with individual workers during the contract negotiation process. The union's endeavor to achieve an equal and fair employment relationship turned even more sour when the biggest restaurant in Chinatown, Jing Fong, was challenged by the union and the complicated forces behind it.

Beating drums, displaying a coffin and chanting, "Slavery must go," a group of about 200 labor advocates and restaurant-union members protested outside the Jing Fong restaurant in Chinatown yesterday. They accused the restaurant's management of violating labor laws by demanding shares of waiters' tips and refusing to pay minimum wage and overtime.

But the protesters faced equally vocal opposition outside the restaurant, on Elizabeth Street, from about 40 Jing Fong waiters and their relatives. Carrying a large aluminum board to deflect the bad luck brought by the coffin, the workers clanked a wok and serving plates and chanted, "Leave us alone" and "Let us live."

(Li, 1995)



Figure 12 Protest in front of Jing Fong, Chinatown, Manhattan, 1995
Source: Corky Lee

Eventually, in 1995 the New York State Attorney General agreed with the union's claim and fined Jing Fong's management \$1.13 million in back wages.

7. The emergence of satellite Chinatowns

The emergence of satellite Chinatowns in the outer boroughs of New York City is mainly an outcome of congestion in the core Chinatown of Manhattan as discussed before. At the same time, the inflating land market galvanized by international capital increased the rent burden on many Chinatown families. For the newly-arriving Chinese immigrants, Chinatown has gradually lost its attraction due to the deterioration of housing and skyrocketing rent. They settled in other boroughs instead, and Chinese restaurants found their new homes in places such as Sunset Park in Brooklyn and Flushing in Queens.



Figure 13 Core and satellite Chinatowns in New York City (Subway lines marked)
Source: Kate Blakmer

The formation of satellite Chinatowns was significantly transportation-orientated with the D, N, R subway lines in Sunset Park and the Seven Train available in Flushing. However, it is possible for the Sunset Park residents to commute to Manhattan Chinatown on a daily base while Flushing is further away.

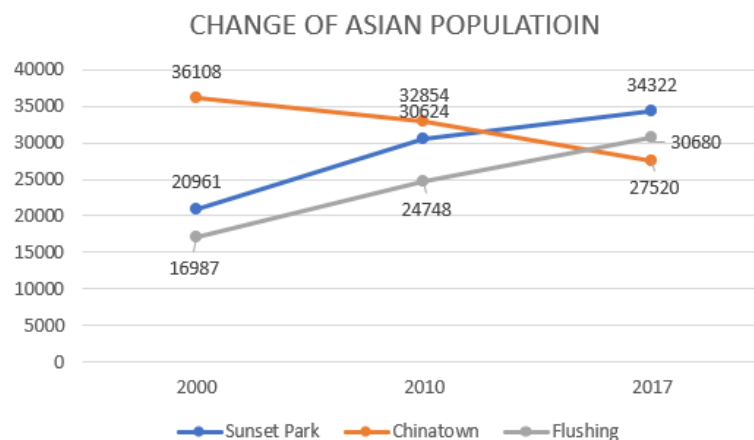


Figure 14 Source: U.S. Census

The satellite Chinatowns are busy hives for commercial activities. The Chinese community began to expand in Brooklyn in the 1970s, and the process accelerated greatly in the 1980s with the thriving garment industry moving out of Manhattan. Sunset Park attracted many poor new working-class immigrants who cannot afford to live in Manhattan's Chinatown.

Flushing has a name of "Asiantown" since it is a congregation of Chinese, Korean, Indian and other Asian ethnicities. Some initial Chinese settlers in Flushing were immigrants from Cuba and South America and opened restaurants serving Chinese-Spanish cuisine. The community began to grow in the late 1950s and early 1960s because of out-movement of American-born second-generation Chinese from Manhattan's Chinatown, and in the 1970s, middle-class immigrants from Taiwan started to settle in Flushing. For the newcomers with adequate savings, Flushing is the place they could realize their American dream of homeownership.

The restaurants in satellite Chinatown had the privilege of the relatively low rent. Their clusters became the competition of the restaurants in Manhattan's Chinatown.

II. Challenges in the 21st century (2000-present)

a. The 9/11 attacks

The 9/11 attacks deeply wounded Chinatown, its economy and community, as never before. Chinatown became a “frozen zone” with other parts of Lower Manhattan. South of Canal Street no truck was allowed; residents were required to show their ID to the police at many spots on the street. For months smoke and dust suffused the air, and reports were showing the rate of children’s asthma increased in Chinatown since 9/11 (Ying & Lai, 2009). 1,000 parking spots on the street and at an adjacent municipal garage were commandeered, making it impossible for businesses to get deliveries or customers. For nearly two months, Chinatown residents and businesses were isolated by the loss of telephone service. In major transit stations, there were signs telling people to avoid Lower Manhattan were posted for more than a year. The city’s long-lasting measures of restricting public access to Chinatown severely hurt the commercial activities in Chinatown.

According to the Asian American Federation of New York (AAFNY)’s report, “Chinatown one year after September 11th: An economic impact study” done in November 2002, the majority of businesses experienced an average 20 percent decline in summer 2002; a total of 40 garment factories closed down in the first three months after 9/11; for nearly half of the restaurants surveyed, revenue generated from tourists was on average 40 percent lower in the summer of 2002 as compared with the summer of 2001; 30 percent of restaurants workers were still working reduced hours around the time when the report was released. Through the report, AAFNY tried to find a solution to the economic decline led by the exodus of the garment industry. They proposed to “strengthen the economic base of Chinatown through targeted workforce development strategies” mostly by new marketing campaigns and improving sanitation. Critics have been attacking the

report because many essential problems faced by restaurants were not properly addressed such as rising rent and labor costs.

The many state and municipal programs aimed at rejuvenating small businesses in Lower Manhattan after 9/11 were not accessible to most of Chinatown's restaurants. The majority of the restaurants were cash-based, thus lacked credit history and documentation. This created significant difficulties for Chinatown's restaurants attempting to obtain institutional loans and funds after the disaster.

| Institution | Program | Number of businesses benefited | Amount of funds |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| Small Business Administration (SBA) | Small Business Administration Loan | 353 of Chinatown's businesses, including 25 restaurants | \$21 million in total |
| Empire State Economic Development Corporation (ESDC) | The Retail Recovery Grant (RRG) Program, the WTC Business Recovery Grant (BRG) Program, the Small Firm Attraction and Retention Grant (SFARG) Program | 2,865 of Chinatown's businesses | \$ 35 million in total |
| New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) | Businesses below 14th Street Loan, and Lower Manhattan Business Retention Grant Program | 322 of Chinatown's businesses | \$ 50 million in total |
| New York Community Trust (NYCT) | The September 11th Fund | Unknown | \$ 4.7 million in total |

Table 2 Institutional monetary assistance to Chinatown's businesses after 9/11
Source: Asian American Federation of New York

According to a survey by Asian American Business Development Center, in the seven months after 9/11, the average amount of lost gross revenue for a single Chinatown business as a result of the terrorist attack was \$58,463. However, each business in Chinatown only received an average of \$9,700, equivalent to approximately one and a half month's rent for a typical business in the area, compared to the Lower Manhattan's average level ranging from \$15,738 to \$21,293 depending on business location (AAFNY, 2002).

To sum up, mostly due to language barriers, accounting and documentation issues, the majority of Chinatown's restaurants received minimum monetary aid from public organizations. Even in the cases when their applications of funds got approved, the allowances were mostly small in dollar amount and had very limited effects.

Following the tragedy, the city submitted an application to the Empire State Development Corporation for designation of Chinatown as an Empire Zone, which would secure certain tax credits and lower utility rates for qualified businesses within. It would also provide opportunities for direct capital investments and increases in employment. The proposed zone was bounded by the East River, Houston Street, Broadway, and the Brooklyn Bridge. The proposal was only approved four years later with partisan politics slowing down the process. Moreover, just like the 9/11 business recovery programs mentioned before, few businesses took full advantage of the benefits realized by the Empire Zone.

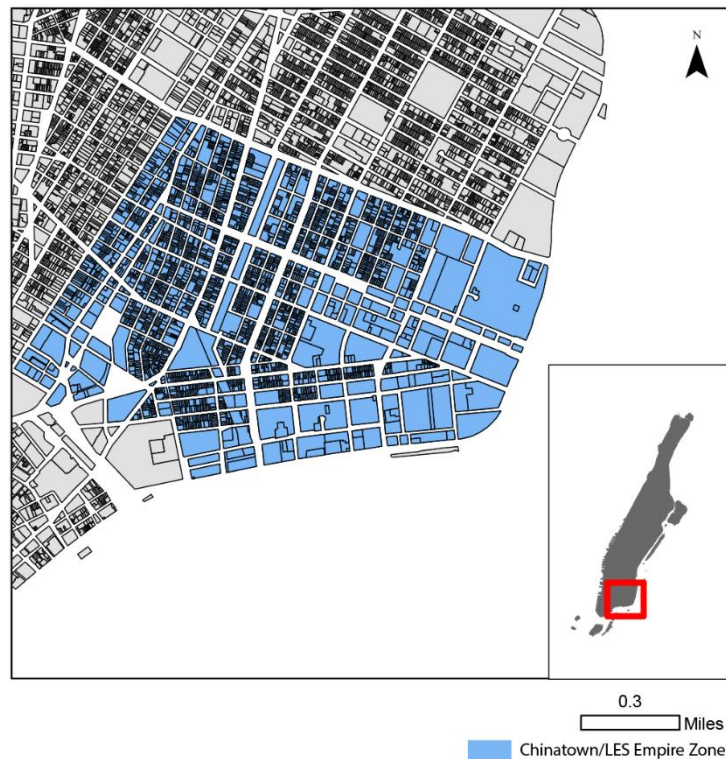


Figure 15 Boundary of Chinatown/LES Empire Zone

The CCBA's answer to Chinatown's declining commercial activities was to build a gigantic Chinese gate. In 2003, the CCBA proposed the "Unity Arch," a \$1.8 million structure to span five lanes of the Bowery with an 85-foot-long and 43-foot-high concrete arch marked by Chinese decorative elements (Umbach & Wishnoff, 2008). The Arch had historical inspiration. Oriental gates exist in many Chinatowns in North America, such as the ones in San Francisco, Washington DC, Chicago, Boston, and others. However, the plan fell short of local support, and Chinatown residents argued that the proposal emphasized tourists over residents. The CCBA's third self-orientalizing effort (the first two being "China Village" and "Chinatown Street Revitalization") to push the Unity Arch failed in the face of the strong community opposition. In 2006, Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (CPLDC) was founded with the aim of rebuilding Chinatown after 9/11. When interviewed by the author, the executive director of CPLDC, Wellington Chen emphasized the importance of unity and collaboration in the community: "We work to bring residents, business owners and community groups together." He also described their approach to preserve Chinatown's unique culture while ensuring its economic vitality as "strategic positioning." Unlike the former attempts by merchant elites who only tried to alter Chinatown's physical environment, CPLDC sees the potential in festive celebrations in marketing Chinatown's restaurant and retail industry. Activities are designed to attract a younger group of customers to come to visit and dine in Chinatown.

With the highly popular Weekend Walks festive street series, Mid-Autumn Festival, One Day in NYC, annual Beautification/Earth Day, East-West Parade with Little Italy, Double Valentine's Day to promote the softer side of Chinatown and the Jewelry District and all the cafes, eateries in the area. Explore Chinatown marketing initiative, Lunar Stages outdoor film screenings, and Taste of Chinatown street events, Chinatown Partnership helps promote the area as a special destination to live, work, and visit.

(CPLDC Website)

Collaborating with the Chinatown Business Improvement District (Chinatown BID), CPLDC also engages in Street cleaning, business assistance, and community engagement. The BID's expenditures are funded by the local property tax.

b. 2008 Lower East Side rezoning

As Chinatown's restaurant industry wobbled out of the shadow of 9/11, they were faced with strong pressure from the rising rent as Chinatown and Lower East Side became one of the hottest real estate markets in New York City.

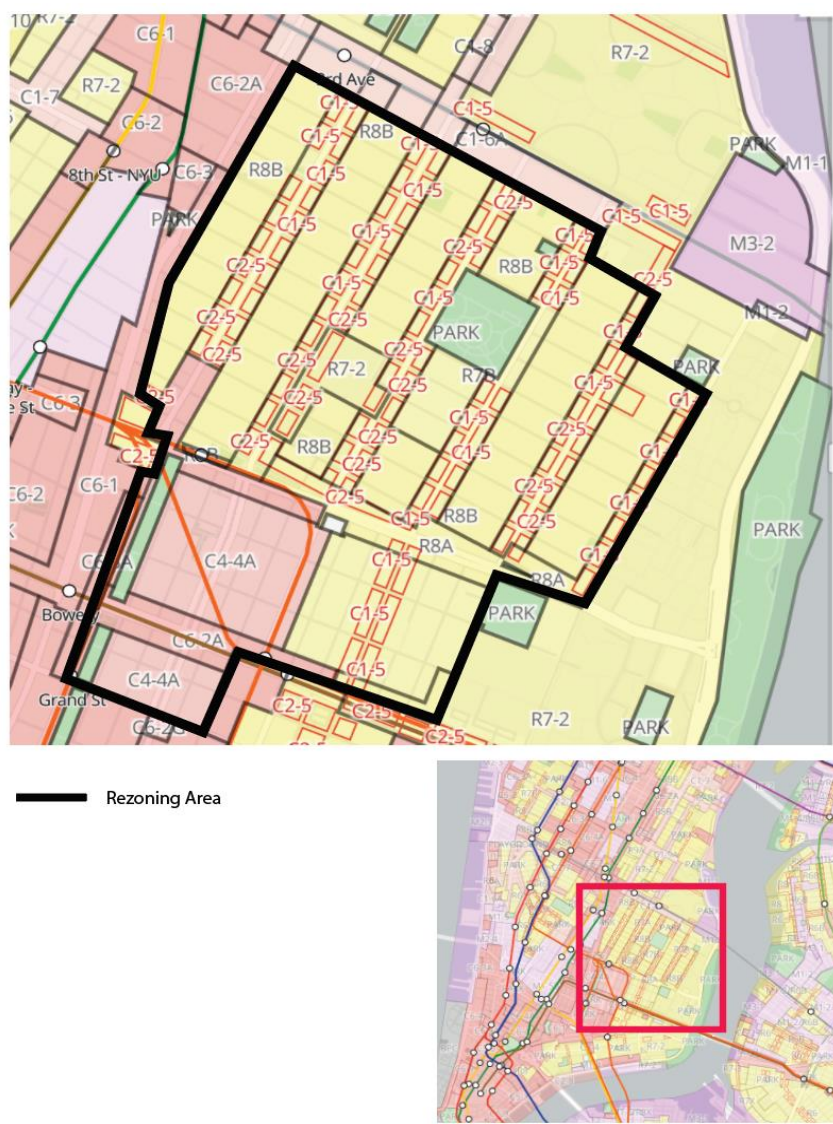


Figure 16 2008 Lower East Side Rezoning

In 2008, DCP started to engage Manhattan Community Board 3 in a rezoning plan of part of the Lower East Side. The rezoning area was zoned R7-2 and C6-1, with C1-5 and C2-5 commercial overlays along major avenues. The proposal would change the 47-year old zoning rules since 1961 for 111 blocks to contextual R7A, R7B, R8B, R8A, and C6-2A, putting a cap (overall 80 feet) on building height of new development. This derived from the concern of out-of-scale tower developments threatening to erode the established low- to mid-rise built character found throughout the area.

The rezoning would also provide incentives for moderate-income housing that the neighborhood desperately needed. An R-7 district was proposed along the wide streets north of Houston Street where the Inclusionary Housing is applicable. With affordable housing provided, the FAR was allowed to reach 4.6.

The rezoning effort met heated community opposition from the Chinatown community which was not included in the proposal and voiced concerns about new developments being pushed into the neighborhood causing displacement. In response, the Chinatown Working Group was founded in 2008 to consider land-use rules for Chinatown with a purpose of benefiting immigrant, working class and public housing residents. The stakeholders included the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and the Lower East Side, the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS), the Chinese Staff and Workers Association, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and other groups. The Chinatown Working Group, together with Manhattan Community Boards 1, 2 and 3, produced a proposal calling for the establishment of seven subdistricts, shown below on the map. It also decided that three areas outside the Special District,

Special Little Italy District, North of Preservation Subdistrict A and North of East Broadway share certain similar characteristics that warrant the same recommendations.



Figure 17 Special District and Sub-Districts boundaries

The CWG Report addressed the issue of affordability of commercial space in the study area. It called for limiting the size of certain commercial use in the Special Zoning District, requiring a

Special Permit for uses like hotels regardless of the size to oppose the growing trend of gentrification. Additionally, property tax abatement for qualified landlords who provide affordable commercial space in the Special District was recommended.

As more and more interest groups threw their support behind the opposing proposal in fear of gentrification in their neighborhood, the Chinatown Working Group's study area expanded greatly. At last, the City Planning Commission rejected the proposal in February 2015, concerning its expansive scale for implementation.

In reviewing the far-reaching proposal, we have concluded that the Special Chinatown and Lower East River District is not feasible at this time. We share many of the same goals as the CWG – in particular, the preservation and development of affordable housing. In the spirit of our shared vision, we believe there are targeted areas of opportunity within the boundaries of your proposal that can further your hard work and help in advance the Mayor's overarching goal of making New York a more equitable city.

Letter from DCP's director Carl Weisbrod to Chairperson of Manhattan Community Board 3 Gigi Li

c. Superstorm Sandy



Figure 18 Lights out in Chinatown & Lower Manhattan after Hurricane Sandy
Source: Iwan Baan

Superstorm Sandy hit New York City severely over the night of the 29th and 30th of October, 2012, inflicting an estimated \$19 billion loss to New York City. The East River overflowed its banks, flooding a large proportion of Lower Manhattan. Power went out for almost all of the residents below 39th Street for the whole week. CAAAV, an established Chinatown community

group stood in the frontline of Sandy relief efforts in Chinatown right after the disaster happened, distributing free water, food, and batteries to residents.

Chinatown's restaurants did not just lose their businesses for a week; seafood restaurants lost thousands of dollars in inventory because of the power failure. It took a long time for their businesses to return to normal, forcing the restaurant owners to lay off their employees and reduce staff hours. Luckily, they would receive grants to make up for lost income after Superstorm Sandy. The Partnership for New York City Fund, in partnership with local organizations, the Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, an affiliate of Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), allocated a total of \$200,000 to help businesses south of Canal Street fix damage, restore inventory and rehire employees. Businesses received a grant of up to \$5,000.

The Chinatown BID and NYC Dept. of Small Business Services held an Emergency Relief Forum for Small Businesses in early November following Superstorm Sandy, and elected officials Congresswoman Velazquez, Speaker Silver, Senator Squadron, Council Member Chin, Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Manhattan Community Board 1,2 and 3 attended the forum. Small businesses learned about FEMA relief and emergency short- and long-term loan assistance.

The city and Goldman Sachs provided \$10 million emergency loan to help small businesses damaged by Superstorm Sandy in New York City. NYC Business Solutions and the New York Business Development Corporation (NYBDC) was responsible for allocating the fund. Small businesses in need could receive a loan up to \$2,5000. These loans were interest-free for the first six months, with 1 percent interest for the following 24 months (Chinatown Partnership Website).

The NYC Industrial Development Agency established the Hurricane Emergency Sales Tax Exemption Program (HESTEP), providing sales tax exemptions of up to \$100,000 to each affected business on purchases to rebuild after the storm.

There is a lack of data presenting how many of the restaurants applied for any emergency relief program in Chinatown.

d. Current status of the restaurant industry in Chinatown



Figure 19 Reference USA study area
Retrieved in April 2019. The database is updated weekly

Restaurant data from the U.S. Businesses database done by Reference USA was organized, analyzed and visualized in this section. This is the only business database that is enhanced with more than 24 million phone calls per year, providing the most accurate data possible. However, since all the information is self-reported, there could be false information provided for many

reasons. That being said, the data still reflect the status of the restaurant industry in Chinatown to some extent. The other advantage of the dataset is that it dates back to 2003, and the methodology it has been using to gather data remains fundamentally the same, which provides the opportunity for time series study.

The businesses included in this study refer to those being verified via phone by Reference USA. The number of businesses will be much smaller than reality because some of them were not verified.

The geographical boundary of the search “Chinatown” from the database of Reference USA is shown above. It refers to the area around Grand Street, Canal Street, East Broadway, Bowery, and Allen Street, similar to the definition according to Google maps. This area derives from Chinatown’s historical core through major transportation corridors. Although most definitions of Chinatown’s boundary go beyond this, this is the area where most restaurants in Chinatown concentrate. The subjects of the following analysis are restaurants within this boundary.

After 9/11 in 2001, the restaurant industry in Chinatown began the long process of recovery. Two years after the tragedy, there were around 160 restaurants in the study area with a total sales volume of around \$ 85 million, hiring 2,126 people. Starting from 2007, the largest financial crisis since the 1930s’ Great Depression struck the New York City’s economy severely.

Restaurant owners interviewed said people generally ate out less, and when they did, they tended to order less food and drinks. However, data indicates most restaurants in Chinatown survived the crisis, and most employees in the industry kept their jobs. This is probably because high-end restaurants, which were more influenced by the crisis, were not the majority of Chinatown’s restaurant industry. That being said, the sales dropped significantly during the crisis. From 2008

to 2010, the total sales of the restaurant industry in the study area decreased by 24 percent (inflation-adjusted), and the average sales volume decreased by 20 percent.

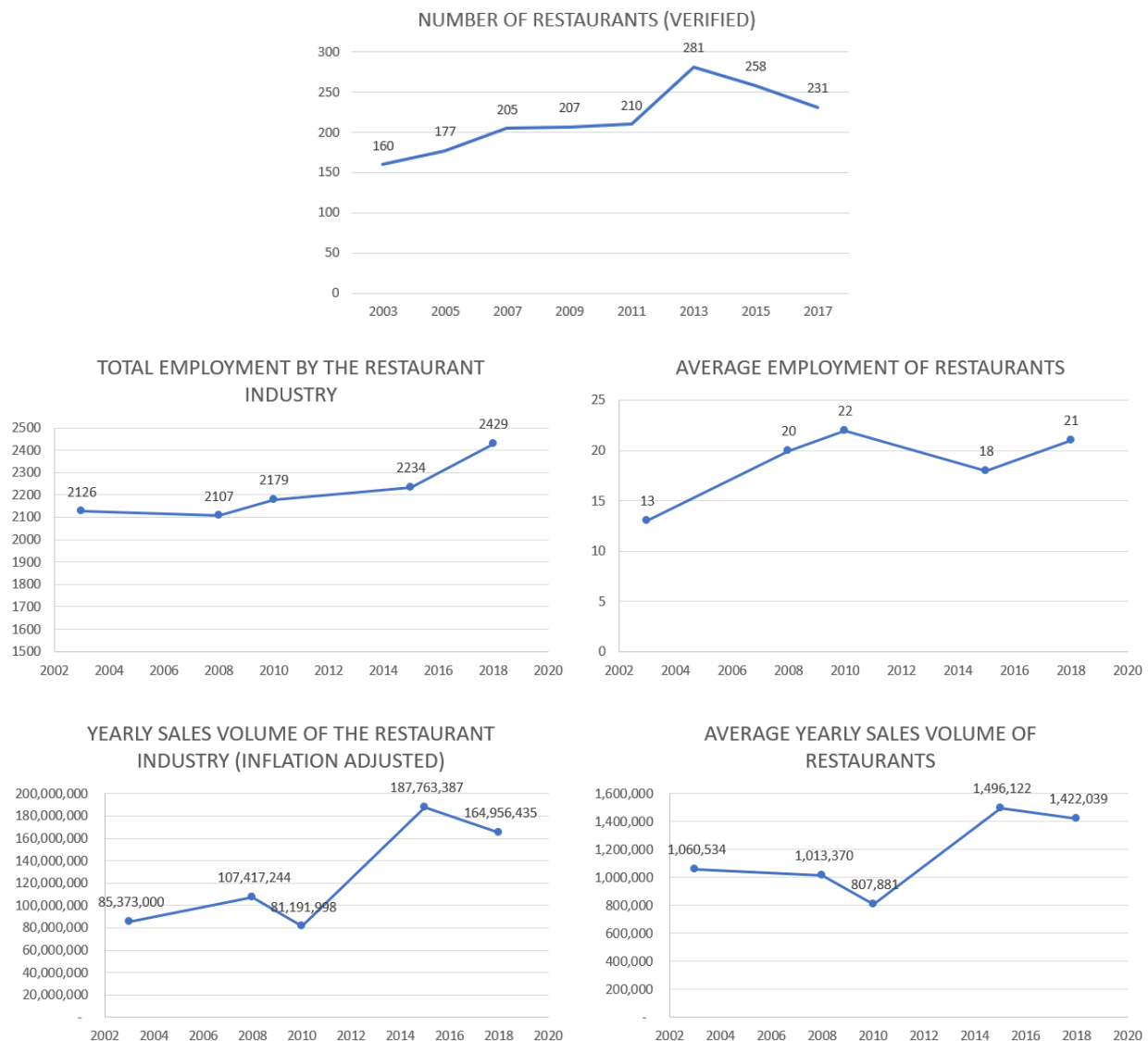


Figure 20-24 Changes in the restaurant industry (verified restaurants)
Source: Reference USA

When the world economy recovered a few years after, Chinatown's restaurant industry experienced a phase of prosperity. In 2013, the number of restaurants rose to 281, 36 percent more than the level of 2009. The total and average sales volume in 2010 doubled (inflation-adjusted) by 2015, although declined slightly towards 2018. Meanwhile, the total employment of

the industry increases steadily to the highest level of 2,429 last year. The average workforce per restaurant has remained around 20 since the financial crisis.

There are 194 restaurants (verified by Reference USA) (both Chinese and non-Chinese) in the study area in 2018. They tend to cluster in the historical core of Chinatown, mostly on Doyers, Pell, and Mott Street which is the most popular part of Chinatown for tourists. The 40 new restaurants (opened since 2016) concentrate on East Broadway, close to the Bowery.



Figure 25 Distribution of restaurants (verified) in the study area in 2018



Figure 26 Cluster of restaurants (verified)

The restaurant industry has long been a pillar of Chinatown's economy. In 2018, 19 percent of businesses in Chinatown were restaurants. The industry's yearly sales accounted for only 7 percent of the total sales of Chinatown, while its workforce accounts for 14 percent of total employment. With a low sales level supporting a large group of labor, it could be expected that the compensation and benefits to each employee are relatively low. This also means that for the restaurants, labor cost would be a large proportion of its expense as demonstrated later in this

section. In a word, the restaurant industry in Chinatown needs to greatly increase its sales to secure its current workforce and expand the space for revenue.

PROPORTION OF BUSINESSES (VERIFIED) BY
INDUSTRY IN CHINATOWN IN 2018

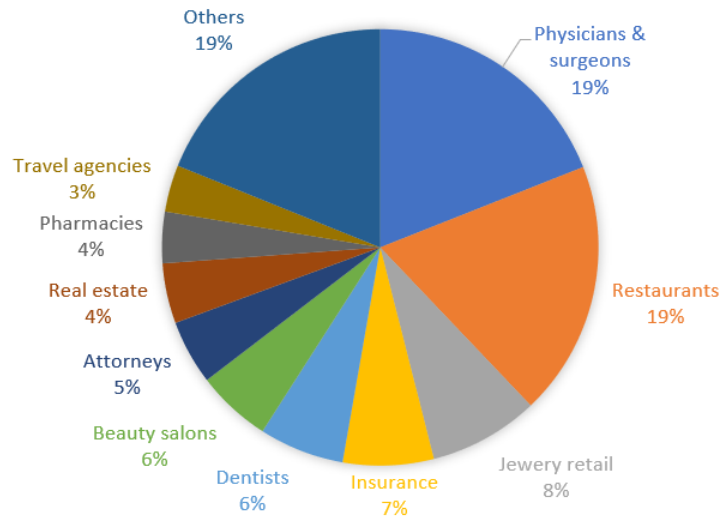


Figure 27 Source: Reference USA

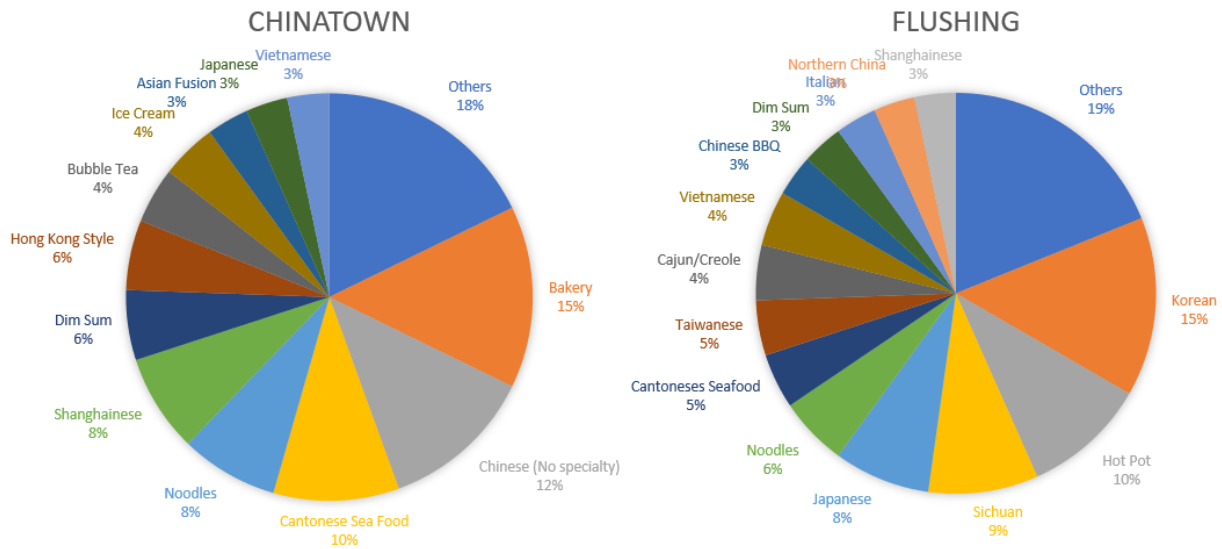


Figure 28-29 Varieties of the restaurants
Source: Yelp

Flushing's restaurant industry would make a good comparison when looking at the inner structure of Chinatown's restaurant industry. In terms of the varieties of restaurants, Chinatown and Flushing have very different compositions. Chinatown has more bakeries, Cantonese

seafood, Dim Sum, Shanghainese food and Fujianese noodles, reflecting the immigration trends mentioned before. There are also many small eateries that are hard to categorize. One can find Sichuan food, Xiao Long Bao and Dim Sum on the same menu in these eateries. Restaurants in Flushing are more specialized with a great number of Korean, Sichuan, Japanese food and Hot Pot. These types of food have been gaining increasing popularity over the past decade.

Reference USA provides a range of expenses for each restaurant by different categories for the year. To calculate the average for all restaurants, this study takes the median of that range as the value of each restaurant's expenses and calculates the mean to serve as the average expense statistic for the industry.

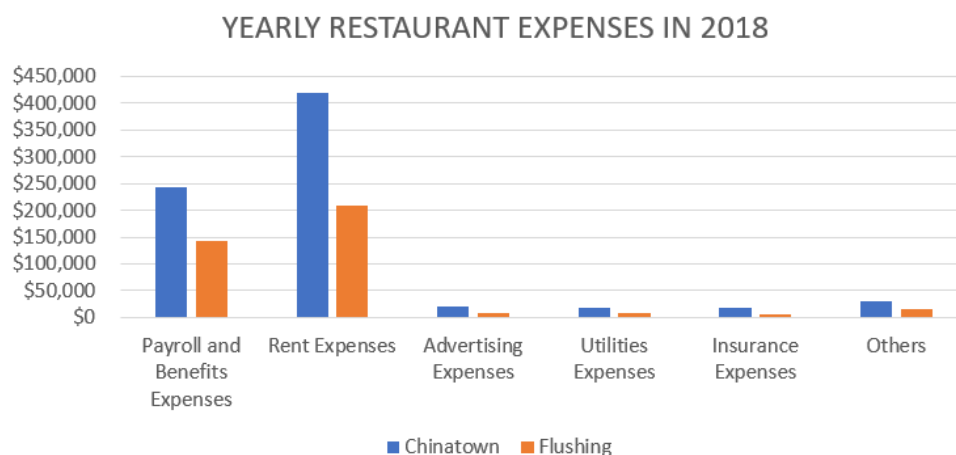


Figure 30 Source: Reference USA

In 2018, the average size of the workforce for a restaurant in Chinatown was 21, while in Flushing the number was only 6. The average square footage of the restaurants in Chinatown was approximately 7,000 sqft, twice of Flushing's average size. Chinatown's restaurants have larger expenses partly because of larger size. Payroll and rent combined accounted for more than 70 percent of total expenses of Chinatown's restaurants. In other words, Chinatown's restaurants are hyper-sensitive to the changes in these two categories.

In 2018, the market rent of restaurants in Chinatown was around \$110 per sqft per year, while in Flushing the average was less than \$70. The industry standard is for a restaurant to pay 10 percent or less of its gross sales in rent (Vianna, 2019) while Chinatown's restaurants are paying almost 30 percent of its sales in rent. Many restaurants in Chinatown that signed the lease many years ago are facing the challenge of negotiating the new affordable rent after their lease expires. Interviewees who own restaurants in Chinatown said the current market commercial rent is thousands of dollars above the rent they are paying now from the old lease. Under this circumstance, to keep the restaurant alive is already very difficult, let alone expanding the business. From the hot spot analysis of ArcGIS, the highest rent expenses in Chinatown occur near Bowery, between Canal and Grand Street. This was consistent with the new development trend (e.g. luxury hotels) along Bowery.



Figure 31 High rent cluster in Chinatown

The mandatory wage of \$15 per hour replaced the former level of \$13 per hour on December 31st, 2018, for all employers with 11 or more employees in New York City. In a survey done by the NYC Hospitality Alliance, 76.5 percent of full-service restaurant respondents said they had to reduce employee hours, and 36 percent said they eliminated jobs in 2018 in response to the mandated wage increase (“New York City Restaurants Cut Employees, Close After Mandatory Wage Increases”). This significant increase (15 percent) in the minimum wage would put Chinatown’s restaurants in a more difficult situation. Many restaurants owners interviewed said that they have to increase the price that they managed to keep unchanged for many years. Because Reference USA does not provide the expenses for raw material (meat, eggs, vegetables,) the profit margin could not be calculated. However, when comparing sales per sqft and sales per employee, bars and bubble tea shops appear to be the most profitable restaurant businesses in Chinatown. Moreover, 7 out of the 40 new restaurants opened since 2016 specialize in sushi, suggesting a large profit in sushi restaurants.

| Company Name | Sales Volume | Square Footage | Sales per sqft |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Rooftop 93 Bar & Lounge | \$940,000 | 750 | 1,253 |
| Bowery Beer Garden | \$826,000 | 750 | 1,101 |
| American East Fuzhou Rstrnt | \$331,000 | 750 | 441 |

Table 3 Most profitable businesses in terms of sales per sqft

| Company Name | Employee Size | Sales Volume | Sales per employee |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Ten Ren's Tea Time | 4 | \$537,000 | 134,250 |
| Bubble Tea | 5 | \$677,000 | 135,400 |
| Sun's Organic Tea & Herb | 5 | \$671,000 | 134,200 |

Table 4 Most profitable businesses in terms of sales per employee

In recent years, local community boards in Chinatown have been overwhelmed by a flood of liquor license applications which is consistent with the finding that bars are the most lucrative

business. While for many bigger and more expensive restaurants in Chinatown such as Jing Fong or August Gathering, selling liquor could enlarge their profit margin, making them more competitive in the market; small eateries who do not have a liquor license could very likely be displaced by the influx of bars which are able to pay higher rent because they could profit more from selling liquor. This may also change Chinatown's neighborhood character. The discretion of community boards in approving liquor license is necessary and should continue.

e. Changing local customer base

This section investigates the demographic changes within the Chinatown Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) (boundary shown in Figure 9).

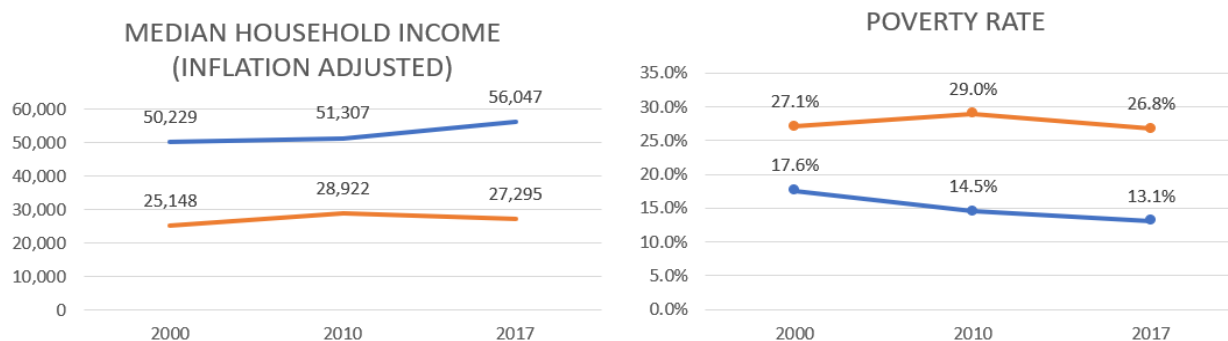


Figure 32-33 Economic change in Chinatown NTA
Source: U.S. Census

There is a large gap in income between Chinatown and Manhattan average. The average income in Chinatown is only around half of Manhattan's average. Accordingly, the poverty rate of Chinatown is almost twice as high as that of Manhattan as a whole. This disparity did not change over the past two decades. The local customers are not very affluent, so there is a limited range that the restaurants could increase their prices.

According to the Garment Industry Development Corporation (GIDC), the number of garment factories in Chinatown decreased by 57 percent, from 246 to 105, from before 9/11, 2001 to June 2005. This decrease in employment for Chinatown residents, affected the economy of Chinatown and put additional pressure on the restaurants.

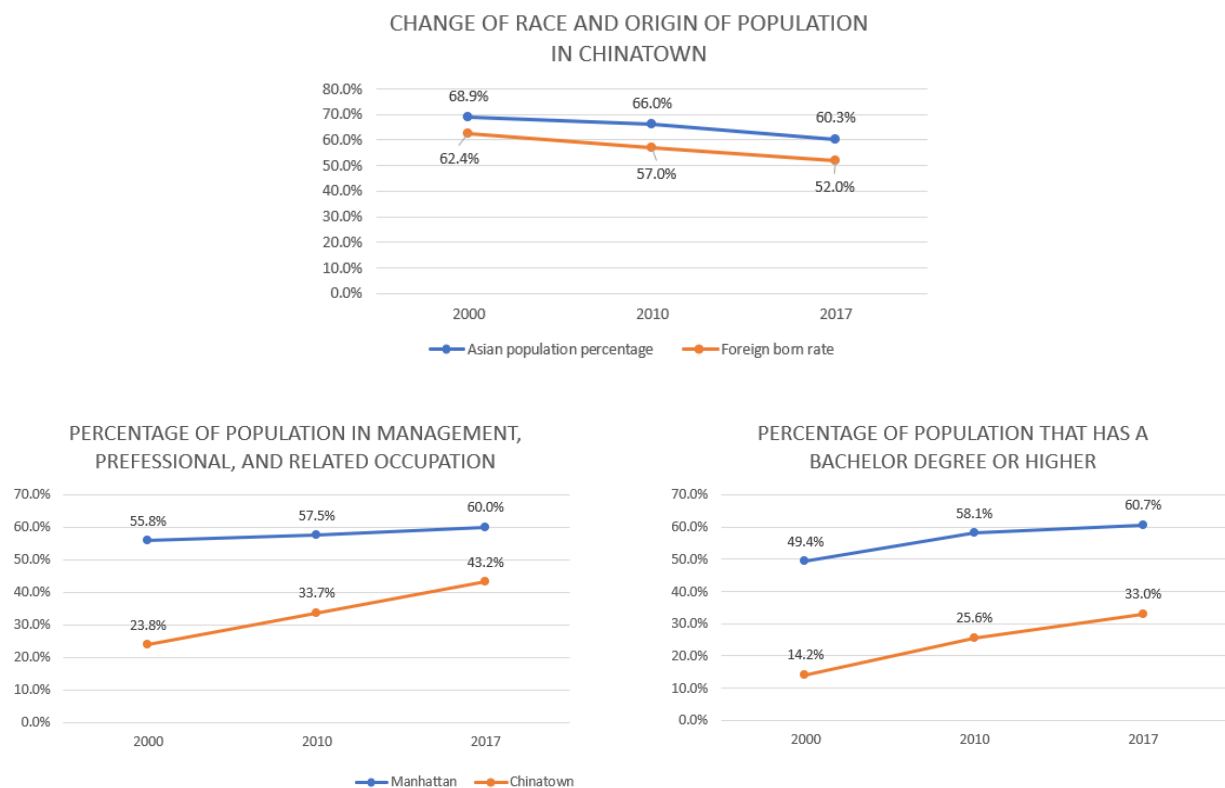


Figure 34-36 Source: U.S. Census

Meanwhile, Chinatown has gradually lost its function as the hub of newly-arrived Asian immigrants as the percentage of Asian population dropped drastically since 2000 as did the proportion of foreign-born residents. The restaurants are serving more and more non-Chinese customers from the surrounding areas. There was also a significant increase in the average level of education among those who work in managerial, professional and related occupations in Chinatown, reflecting the gentrification in the neighborhood.

In 2018, the percentage of population over 65 years old in Chinatown has reached 17 percent (New York City's average is 13 percent), the community is aging significantly. Among the

elderly population, 35 percent (4,573) is struggling with poverty. Many studies suggest that since elderly people have less mobility, local service such as food, medical care, and public space become even more important in the aging neighborhoods.

Restaurants are a crucial channel of service for Chinatown's seniors, who make up a significant segment of the restaurants' customers. The elderly population (especially those living in poverty) are the most sensitive to prices yet many restaurants have been feeling the pressure of raising the prices on their menu.

f. Customer base in the adjacent neighborhoods

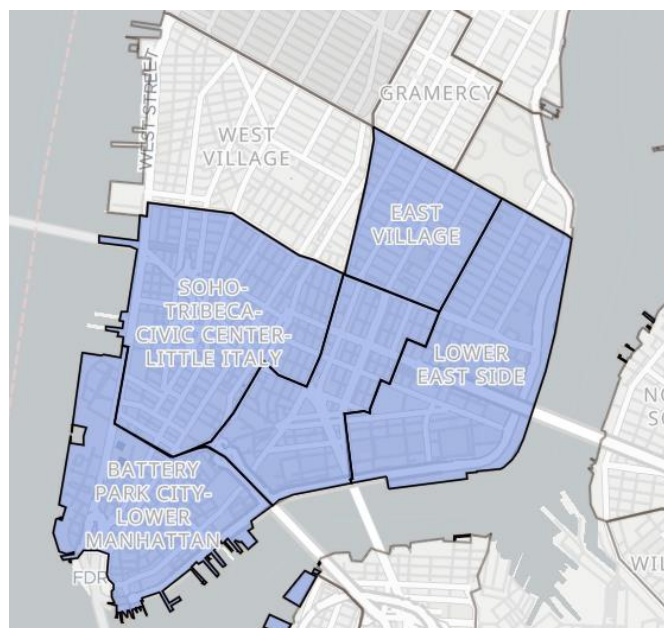


Figure 37 Neighborhoods around Chinatown NTA

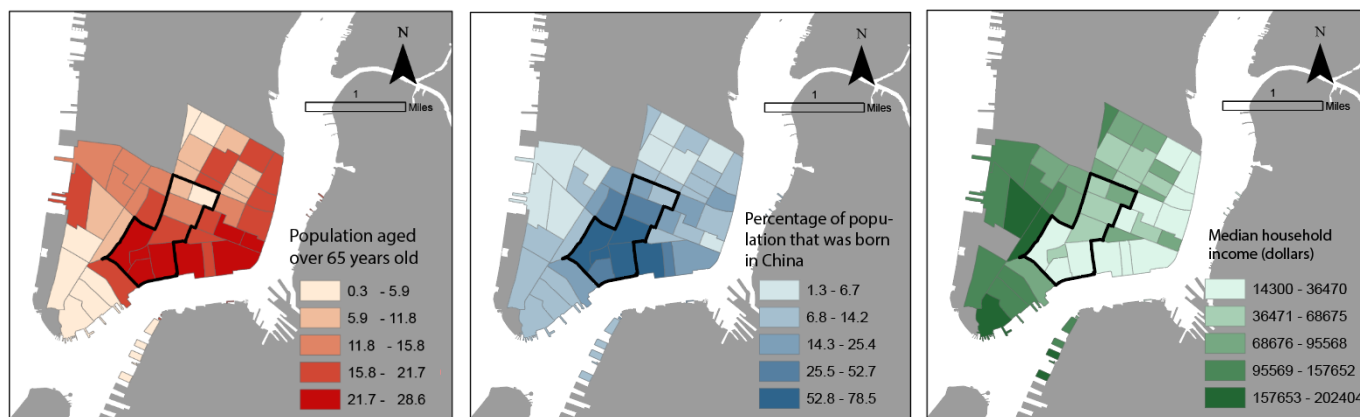


Figure 38-40 Selected demographic and economic features of neighborhoods around Chinatown NTA

Using the Neighborhood Tabulation Area map, four surrounding neighborhoods of Chinatown are identified: Lower East Side, East Village, Soho-Tribeca-Civic Center-Little Italy, and Battery Park-Lower Manhattan. People living in these neighborhoods are also potential customers of Chinatown's restaurants. These neighborhoods are within walking or short public transit distance from Chinatown. At the same time, they are within the delivery radius of restaurants in Chinatown.

Throughout these neighborhoods, there is an overlap of low income population, high percentage of people from China and high percentage of elderly population. As mentioned before, the restaurants should figure out a way to cater to this group.

Part of Lower East Side is also generally considered Chinatown. 30.3 percent of its population is foreign-born among which 50.3 was born in China (45.2 percent is from mainland China). The Median Household Income is fairly low (\$31,180 in 2017). 19.9 percent of households spend more than 50 percent of their income on rent.

East Village is an affluent neighborhood compared to Chinatown and Lower East Side NTA. 70.6 percent of people have a Bachelor degree or higher, and 66.2 percent of population works in management, business, science and arts. The Median Household Income grew to \$73,965 in 2017.

Soho-Tribeca-Civic Center-Little Italy and Battery Park-Lower Manhattan both have a high percentage of population living alone (around 40 percent) who might be a large market for delivery service. The former's Median Household Income is \$191,870 while the latter's is \$110,675, each at least three times that of the mainly Chinese neighborhoods.

To sum up, Chinatown's restaurants are serving a very diverse customer group in terms of income and ethnicity. There is market for both small eateries and luxury restaurants. Therefore, a

diverse restaurant industry ecology in Chinatown where all customers could find the food and service they desire should be a goal of interventions.

g. Challenges of business practices

To examine the business practices of Chinatown’s restaurants, this study utilizes data from Yelp.com. Yelp publishes crowd-sourced reviews on businesses as well as plenty of useful business information. Often, before going to a restaurant for the first time, a customer will look up the business on Yelp to see its average rating and the reviews written by previous customers, so positive feedback is of vital importance to restaurants. Because information on Yelp.com comes from a vast group of customers, it depicts the business practices more objectively. This makes Yelp data ideal for detecting patterns in business practices of restaurants.

The “business practice score” is created to synthesize multiple factors of business performance. The five indicators and their given values are shown in the charts below. The “business practice score” is the sum of all these factors. The higher the score, the better the business practice.

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Rating on Yelp | Under 3.5 stars | 3.5-4 stars | 4.5-5 stars |
| Score | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------|----------------|
| 2. Number of reviews on Yelp | Less than 500 | 500-1000 | More than 1000 |
| Score | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 3. Is the business claimed on Yelp? | Yes | No |
| Score | 3 | 1 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| 4. Health Score | A | B | C |
| Score | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|----|
| 5. Accept credit card? | Yes | No |
| Score | 3 | 1 |

Table 5-9 Indicators of the “business practice score”

The third indicator “Is the business claimed on Yelp?” measures the degree of active interaction between restaurants and their customers. The claimed restaurants can reply to customers’ review and update business information such as opening and closing time. In reality, many unclaimed businesses do not pay attention to customers’ reviews at all, let alone improving their food and service accordingly. It is also crucial for a restaurant to accept credit cards. It is not just for the convenience of the customers. More importantly, this ensures the financial credibility of the restaurant when applying for a loan or grant from banks or institutions.

The “business practice score” for Chinatown and Flushing are 9.2 and 10.1. The differences lie in these aspects: 1) Almost 20 percent of restaurants in Chinatown are low-rated restaurants while in Flushing it is less than 3 percent; 2) 29 percent of restaurants in Chinatown have a health score other than “A” while in Flushing it is 16 percent; 3) 49 percent of restaurants do not accept credit cards in Chinatown while in Flushing only 22 percent of restaurants do not accept credit cards. In conclusion, restaurants in Chinatown have less competitive business practices than the ones in Flushing.

Yelp. com also provides price information for restaurants. In Chinatown, more than half of the restaurants are in the low-price range while in Flushing, most restaurants are within the medium-price range. Facing the increasing rent and wages, the business model of most Chinatown’s restaurants may become unsustainable.

The Asian American Federation’s report pointed out that in Chinatown’s restaurant industry, 1) undifferentiated businesses compete only on price to capture market share, leaving poor profit margins for all involved; 2) off-the-books accounting hurts the ability of businesses to build a credit history, needed to access small business assistance from banks and government sources; and 3) paying low wages makes it difficult to attract quality workers. This study also found that

the common failure to maintain a good online image also hurts the industry, repelling new customers while losing the current ones.

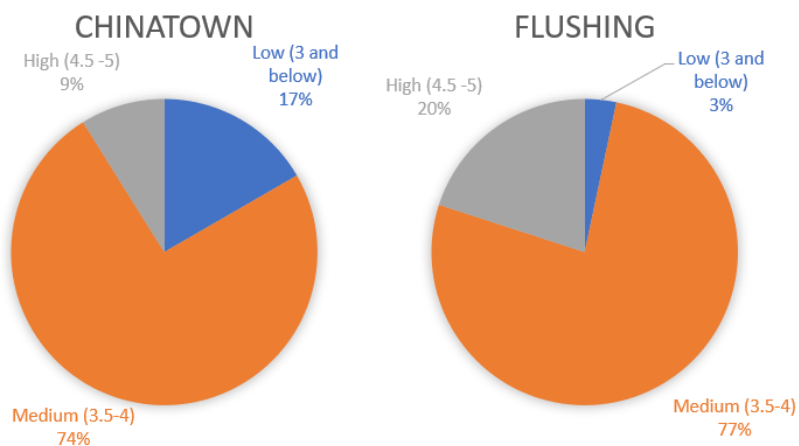


Figure 41-42 Restaurant's rating on Yelp

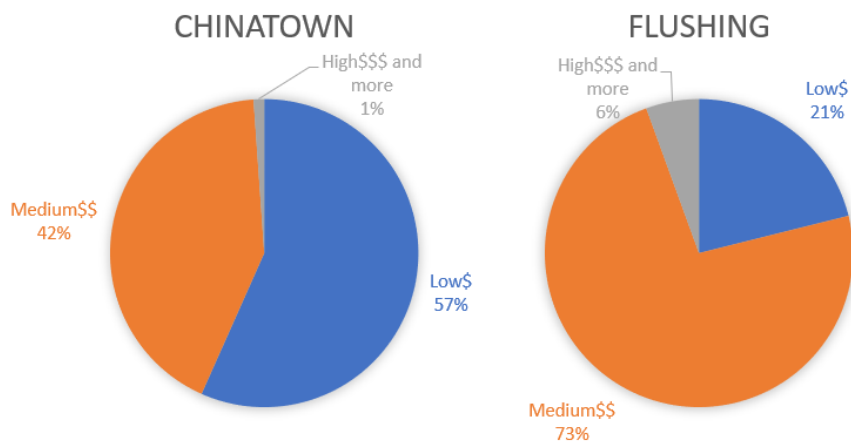


Figure 43-44 Price range of restaurants
Source: Yelp. com

III. Conclusion

a. Key findings

The restaurant industry in Chinatown emerged as an inner function of a bachelor society, serving local Chinese immigrants. As its popularity grew among the non-Chinese population, it became a crucial part of Chinatown's tourism industry, connecting the enclave economy to the citywide or even larger scale of the economy.

The merchant elites in Chinatown initiated the earliest and most long-lasting social organization in the community. However, rather than being dedicated to the bolstering of commerce as it was intended to be, this institution set its major goal to maintain its paternalistic authority over Chinatown's society.

As part of the marginalized economy of an ethnic enclave, the restaurants in Chinatown had to survive a discriminative social environment and the intense competition from the industry. Many small restaurants adapted by taking advantage of their customers, which harmed the image of the industry.

One of the early institutional interventions in Chinatown's businesses could be described as "self-orientalizing," an initiative to change the built environment of the enclave to attract customers from the outside. This initiative used ethnicity as an asset by incorporating elements of Chinese architecture and cultural identity. In the absence of substantial action addressing social problems such as poverty, these prescriptions were unpopular among the locals whose opinions were not considered and failed because of Chinatown's complex socio-political landscape.

The immigration pattern of Chinatown shaped the development of the restaurant industry, mostly in terms of its size, geographical distribution, and variety. The relaxation of the Chinese

Exclusion Act enhanced the expansion and diversification of Chinatown's restaurant industry. However, in the new stage of development, restaurants faced the challenge of keeping up with the rising rent and legal costs of hiring. What is more, the growing satellite Chinatowns in other boroughs intensified the competition in the industry.

The year of 2001 when 9/11 happened was the watershed after which the governmental or quasi-governmental interventions started to play a much more significant role in assisting Chinatown's restaurants. Unfortunately, not a lot of the restaurants that suffered from 9/11 benefited from the monetary assistance from public or private institutions because they either did not consider it as an option or did not qualify due to their off-the-book accounting. The local not-for-profits worked diligently in providing business loans, hosting business training workshops, and improving sanitation. Their influence could be enhanced if more of the restaurant businesses participated in their programs. There has been a general lack of trust between the restaurant owners and the intervenors.

The customer groups of Chinatown's restaurants continue to change. As the garment industry declined, daytime customers decreased drastically. Meanwhile, the surrounding neighborhood has become more affluent, and the non-Chinese population is increasing. Restaurants have been raising prices, but that is just the very first step in the process to adapting to a new customer group.

The industry today provides a considerable amount of jobs to Chinese immigrants, yet the sales fall short, especially when considering the skyrocketing rent and wages. The large portion of the industry consists of restaurants without a specialty competing for lower prices. Living on thin profit margins, their ability to resist economic crisis or other kinds of emergencies is fairly low. To make things worse, many of the restaurants have not realized the importance of

communicating with their customers through social networks, resulting in a negative online image. In a word, it will be more and more difficult for Chinatown's restaurants to survive the changing environment if they do not change their business strategies and practices.

b. Existing interventions

From the interviews with restaurant owners, the most helpful interventions are provided by Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (CPLDC)/ Chinatown Business Improvement District (Chinatown BID) (They are run by the same group of people) and Asian Americans For Equality (AAFE).

CPLDC provides helpful business services such as a health inspection compliance tour, public workshops introducing changes to relevant regulations, and they recently started collaborating with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to transform some streets in Chinatown to purely pedestrian use for a few months in the summer with a theme celebrating Chinatown's cultural identity as demonstrated in the coming section.

The Chinatown BID has been focusing on a "Clean Street Program" which would improve the living environment of the local people as well as change people's image of Chinatown being a dirty neighborhood which will possibly bring more visitors.

We began by sending our community outreach representatives out to talk to business owners to ensure their cooperation. Then our experts did a detailed assessment of every street in Chinatown, using handheld computers to record over 1,400 issues, including graffiti, potholes, ripped awnings and sidewalk conditions.

Using customized mapping software, the neighborhood was divided into "zones" where the Clean Streets team is dispatched armed with state-of-the-art tools and cleansers.

(CPLDC Website)

Chinatown Partnership also placed 48 new green steel trash cans around Chinatown which would effectively reduce rodent infestation.

AAFE assists the restaurants financially with their popular small business loan program.

Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, an affiliate of AAFE, has provided loans to more than 1,200 small business in New York City during the past two decades. Businesses can get loans of up to 100,000 dollars with a simple application. The funds come from various state and municipal small business programs. AAFE also provides training and counseling services to local entrepreneurs.

c. Existing recommendations

For restaurants:

- Change business strategies and improve business practices to serve a diverse customer base better ●
- Work on better complying with laws and regulations ●

For government and local organizations:

- Improve the general street environment, focusing on pedestrian movement, safety and cleanliness ● ●
- Improve parking condition ● ●
- Improve solid waste management, and alleviate rodent infestation ● ●
- Provide access to capital for investment in business improvements ● ●
- Advise and assist restaurant owners on business strategy, market research and marketing, customer service (use of English), employee wages and benefits, and compliance issues ● ● ●
- Strengthening and professionalizing Chinatown local business associations ● ●
- Increase density along major transportation corridors, introduce new developments to Chinatown ●
- Enhance wayfinding with a walking tour app ●
- Implementing a historic walking tour ●
- Increase public space utilization such as street closures for pop-up art and market ● ● ●
- Provide affordable housing ● ●
- Require special permits on hotel use to prevent business displacement ● ●
- Limit rentable commercial area to prevent influx of big-box tenants threatening small businesses ● ●
- Set aside some percentage of new commercial floor area for local businesses ●
- Provide tax abatement to Chinatown's landlords who offer affordable commercial space for local businesses ●
- Legalize existing signages to maintain Chinatown's unique streetscape ●
- Form an economic development action group to implement the existing recommendations ●
- Foster next generation of Chinatown's entrepreneurs through hosting training programs and communication platforms ●
- Create a special zoning district to maintain affordable commercial space for local small businesses ●
- Create an Asian Food Center in Chinatown featuring food retails, wholesale and small restaurants ●
- Develop more cultural events of Chinatown to enhance pride among local people and attract more visitors ● ●
- Create a major coordinate market campaign for Chinatown's businesses ● ●
- Create a Business Emergency Grant Pool Program ●

- Asian American Federation Report
- Chinatown Street Revitalization Report
- Chinatown Working Group Report
- Columbia GSAPP Report
- Chinatown Property and Business Owners Group Proposal
- Chinatown Partnership Proposal

Due to the lack of resources and different priorities of stakeholders, many of the existing recommendations have not realized, among which a market campaign for Chinatown is relatively feasible and would promote the restaurant sales in the long run. This study developed a plan with this idea as will be shown in the next section.

d. Recommendations from this study

Different studies and stakeholders have provided numerous recommendations in the past decades, but not many of them got realized. In many cases, it is beyond the ability of local organizations to mobilize enough resources to reach their goals while the institutions who are capable of making a change have other priorities. Moreover, there is a common mentality among restaurant owners, especially the older generation who are unwilling to change or receive help. This study attempts to propose more actionable plans tailored for Chinatown's restaurant industry.

For restaurants and local organizations advising restaurants

1. Develop delivery business

According to Yelp. com, only 56 percent of restaurants in Chinatown provide delivery service. It was demonstrated in the former section that there exists a large market for restaurant delivery around Chinatown. Assistance should be provided to Chinatown's restaurants to build their delivery businesses.

2. Promote the use of credit cards

Many restaurants avoid the use of credit cards because they do not want to pay the fee to the credit card company and they prefer to under-report their sales to pay fewer taxes. However, when trying to apply for a medium or large loan from a private bank, having an underreported

sales record can cause problems. At the same time, accepting credit cards makes patronage more convenient for the customers.

3. Enhance online marketing and interaction with customers

Chinatown Ice Cream Factory and Nam Wah Tea Parlor built much of their success on online marketing. Making the restaurant visible for customers online will bring in much more business because customers nowadays do not walk into a strange restaurant without checking their reviews online. Chinatown's restaurants could start by claiming their accounts on Yelp and Google Maps so that they could populate these pages with accurate business information, and reply to their customers' reviews. With feedback from the customers, they could effectively improve the quality of food and service. There are other simple ways to promote the restaurant online such as encouraging customers to write reviews or post photos of cuisines on social media. Research has shown high-quality tempting photos are the key to bringing more customers to the restaurants.

5. Specialize products

Many people prefer the absolute best for each kind of food. Interviews with successful entrepreneurs in the restaurant industry reveal the importance of specialization. Restaurants with narrow focus but great attention to detail on that product tend to be more attractive in this age. Chinese Tuxedo, a well-known high-end restaurant is currently run by the Chu Family which has rich experience in the restaurant industry in Chinatown. They have less than twenty items on the menu, and many people would pay a high price for dining there. Kam Hing, a Hong Kongese bakery on Pell Street, which specializes in cheap but delicious sponge cake has also been drawing many local customers as well as visitors from outside.

6. Increase food and drink prices while looking after the local seniors

Increasing prices seems to be the dread of many restaurants in Chinatown because they worry that their regular local customers who are more sensitive to prices would go to their competitors. However, all restaurants need a reasonable profit margin to survive in the market. Considering the increasing rent, wage and raw material prices, keeping the same price (many restaurants have been doing this for a long time, some for more than ten years) seems unsustainable.

At the same time, restaurants could balance the price increasing with some special policies for local vulnerable people, mostly seniors. For example, they could provide cheap lunch for local seniors or people with a disability.

Large-scale planning intervention

Pedestrianize Doyers Street permanently

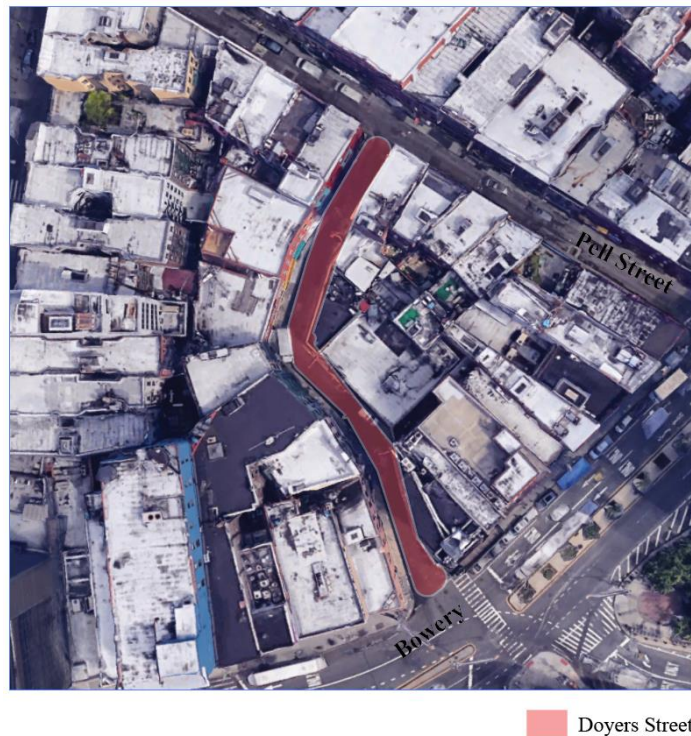


Figure 45 Doyers Street

Doyers Street is a 200-foot-long street with no traffic signal in the corner of the Chinatown's historic core, connecting Pell Street and Bowery. It is home for the Chinatown branch of post office, Nan Wah Tea Parlor (the earliest Dim Sum place in New York City), Chinese Tuxedo (a luxury new-style restaurant based on the old Chinese Tuxedo Restaurant), and a few barber shops and hair salons. Being the notorious "Blood Angle" for gang shootings and hosting the oldest Chinese theatre, it is one of the most historical, unique and well-known streets in Chinatown.

Chinatown Partnership (CPLDC) initiated the conversion of Doyers Street to a pedestrian-only street temporarily in the summer of 2018 which, according to the restaurant owners, improved the sales of their businesses. This study proposes to make this conversion permanent, as the benefits could go beyond the restaurants to the broader range of people and businesses in Chinatown.

Rationale and goals

Pedestrianization is common among tourist attractions. For example, in the summer of 2009, New York City temporarily closed Broadway around Times Square. It was considered a great success, and the transition became permanent later. The first section of the pedestrian plaza was unveiled in 2014, and Times Square has become a more prominent symbol for New York City with diverse activities happening all year long.

The DCP report in 1975 has already brought up the pedestrian circulation problem in Chinatown's historic core, after which more Chinese immigrants have rushed into the neighborhood. In the interview with the head of CPLDC, Wellington Chen, he argued that with Chinatown's physical and socio-economic context, planning for pedestrians is more important than planning for vehicles. Inspired by these, the proposed pedestrianization project has the goal

of 1) easing pedestrian-vehicular conflicts and pedestrian congestion; 2) encouraging pedestrian movement and promote access, safety, convenience; 3) providing public space for recreation and communication as well as for cultural events and public art; 4) enriching Chinatown's unique and lively street life while accentuating the iconic commercialism neighborhood character; 5) creating a new landmark and tourist destination in Chinatown to bring more foot traffic to the restaurants as well as other small businesses around.

Summary of the environmental impacts

This section only provides a framework for evaluating how the proposed project would affect the neighborhood. Further analysis should be based on community input and scientific studies.

Land use and zoning



Figure 46 Land use around Doyers Street

Doyers Street has been the commercial center of the neighborhood since Chinatown formed in the late 19th century. Today, the surrounding blocks still feature mixed commercial and residential use. It was zoned C6-1 with other parts of the historic core which is typical in business districts. The project would not alter the land use or zoning of the parcels in the neighborhood.

Historical and cultural resources

Doyers Street holds significant historical and cultural value for Chinatown and even New York City. It witnessed the beginning of the Chinatown in the city and its evolution since then. The segregation, xenophobia, and violence are intertwined with the history of Doyers Street and should not be forgotten.

Doyers was one of the deadliest streets in America. Some studies attribute this phenomenon to the discriminative American legislation that deeply wounded the Chinese community and nurtured the development of a peculiar social structure:

At the time, the Chinese population in America was a bachelor society of men who had worked the cross-country railroads and California gold mines. Chinese women never even had a chance to make it to the states, due to policymakers who had started to fear the influx of male Chinese immigrants and enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. With the resulting abnormally high male-to-female ratio, Chinatown became known as a hotbed of masculine vice.

For those in charge, the act passed to keep more Chinese people from emigrating to the United States wasn't enough. Fear of the Chinese population taking white middle-class jobs caused those who had made it to the USA to be relegated to laundries and restaurants. For men not interested in either of those professions, there weren't many other options besides gang life.

(Hines, 2018)



Figure 47 The Chinese Theatre on Doyers Street in the late 19th century
Source: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/bloody-angle>

The fatal conflicts in the early 20th century between the two Tongs (gangs) Hip Sings and On Leongs at Doyer's corner took countless lives. Even in the late 1980s, the region was not peaceful with the tension between the Chinese gang Fei Long and the Vietnamese gang BTK.

Today, Doyers Street is listed a “must-go” in Chinatown in all kinds of travel guides, and new businesses are emerging around it. Visitors still come to Doyers out of curiosity just like the “Uptowners” on a “Slumming” tour a century ago. However, the image of Chinese immigrants and Chinatown has changed in every aspect. Chinatown has been reborn on the debris of blood and tears, and Doyers has embraced its new life.



Figure 48 Artist Chen Dongfan and his work “The Song of Dragons and Flowers” on Doyers Street²¹

In memory of the remarkable lady from Chinatown who advocated for women's suffrage in the early 20th century, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, CPLDC initiated a public art project to gather ideas to paint Doyers Street and close it for pedestrians in June 2018. The post office on Doyers was renamed after the heroine at the same time. The winning proposal of the competition was characterized by bright color and abstract illustration of dragons and flowers, representing the

enlightenment and growing power of women. It was also a revolutionary interpretation of Chinatown that went beyond old cultural stereotypes, showing people the diversity, vitality and friendliness of the neighborhood, making people rethink and reimagine Chinatown.

The proposed project will offer the opportunity to further explore the historical and cultural value of Doyers Street, and start a conversation about the true identity of Chinatown and its people.

Urban design and neighborhood character



Figure 49 Doyers Street's built form
Source: Wonderingstus.com

Doyers Street's urban design features a one-way drive road and narrow sidewalks. The street has an almost 90-degree turn in the middle. Typical tenement walk-up buildings with fire escape were erected around the 1910s. The facades were generally made of bricks and are now covered with colorful paint, decorated by signages with English and Chinese characters.

The proposed project will convert Doyers' drive road to a pedestrian way with plants, seats, tables, umbrellas, sculptures and art installations as well as a lane for pedestrian circulation. There will also be space set aside in front of each business. The proposed project might share

visual and functional similarities with CPLDC and DOT's conversion of Mott Street for non-vehicle use in 2017. However, the Mott Project is temporary, so the facilities are simple and moveable with more practical and less aesthetic considerations. The winning design proposal for the Doyers Project should creatively infuse Chinatown's abundant historical and cultural assets, while preserving the current built form.



Figure 50 Mott was turned to a shared street by CPLDC and DOT in 2017
Source: CPLDC

Socio-economic conditions

This study has demonstrated the difficulties faced by Chinatown's restaurants nowadays: increasing costs are compressing the revenues, and subsequently, the wages for their employees.

Doyers Street is in the midst of Chinatown's restaurant cluster, and the proposed project would rejuvenate the restaurant industry. By introducing more foot traffic to the area, pedestrianization will help the restaurants around Doyers which mainly cater to the visitors.

The former pedestrianization projects attracted plenty of New Yorkers who were looking for authentic food and experience of Chinatown. The influence kept increasing when people started to post it on social platforms. Furthermore, to get to Doyers Street, most visitors need to walk past

other parts of Chinatown, creating the radiation effect over businesses within the larger neighborhood.

To sum up, the proposed project will serve as a regional economic development engine, improving the socio-economic condition of the locals by empowering the businesses.

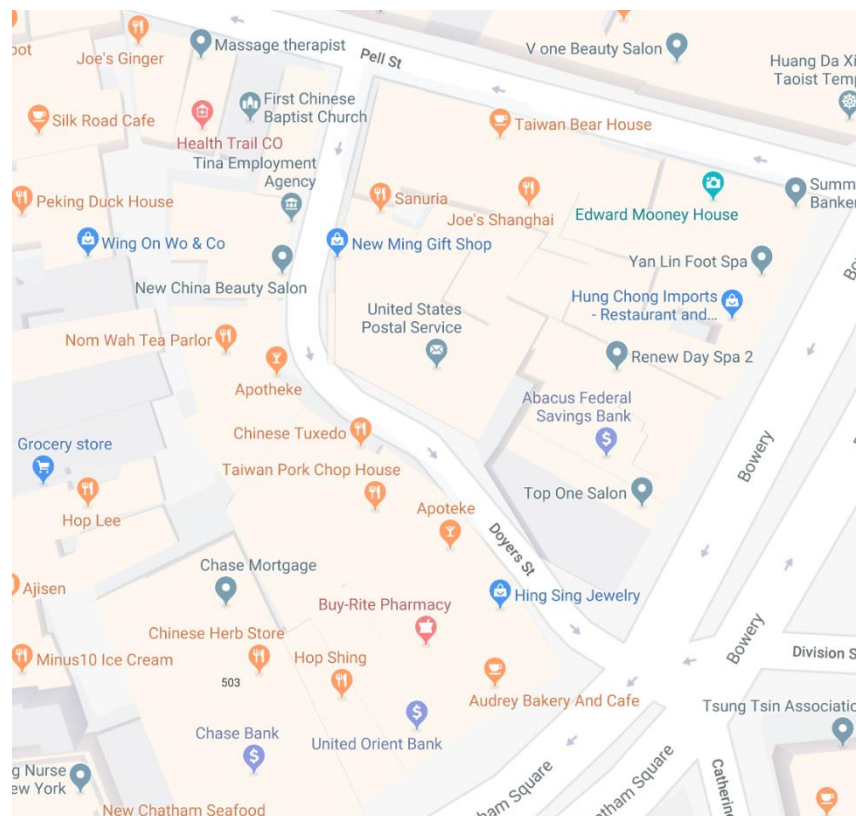


Figure 51 Businesses around Doyers Street

Open space

There has been a long-standing lack of public space in Chinatown. To make things worse, Chinatown's historic core does not have trees on its sidewalks. Columbus Park is the only open space in the historic core, and it is often overcrowded. From observations, the seniors have no place to sit during the rush hours as is shown in the photo below. The growing number of seniors in the neighborhood calls for more accessible public space. Yet the proposed new borough-based

jail construction will take place near the park. Dust and noise will plague the park for up to ten years.

Although in terms of scale, the proposed project will not solve the shortage of open space in the historic core, it will provide the locals with a new location for recreation. The design of the pedestrian plaza will address the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

However, it is worth noticing that the proposed project will increase the flow of visitors which might intensify the overcrowding issue in public space in the neighborhood. A study on how do Chinatown locals utilize public space could provide information to help mitigate this issue.



Figure 52 Over-crowded Columbus Park

Traffic

For most of its residents and visitors, the Chinatown experience is more of a pedestrian experience. The residents can walk to services they need within the neighborhood, and visitors have multiple choices of public transportation to access the historic core. Studies have shown that insufficient parking and severe congestion will discourage people from driving to a certain neighborhood until a new equilibrium of road traffic is reached, which is the case of Chinatown.



Figure 53 Pedestrians walk on the driveway of Doyers Street (2007)

Source: John Blough

Doyers has a single-lane and a short drive road that is not important in the overall road hierarchy in the neighborhood. On the larger scale, people are generally aware of the scarcity of parking and the difficulties of driving around in Chinatown, so they tend to use public transportation to get to the region, then walk to their destinations. This study argues that the proposed project would not significantly depress the vehicle traffic conditions in Chinatown.

From the aspect of pedestrian circulation, the proposed project would significantly enlarge the capacity of Doyers Street. The current situation on Doyers is that people have already been using it as a mainly pedestrian street. Instead of walking on the narrow pavements, many people choose to walk on the road. The pedestrianization of Doyers Street will only make the pedestrian experience safer and more enjoyable. However, these assumptions need the support of an up-to-date traffic circulation study of Chinatown.

Noise

Various noises have been an important part of Chinatown's unique street life, and rooted in people's perception of Chinatown. The proposed project would bring in more visitors to the neighborhood which will increase the noise during the day, but not very likely in the night (there is only one bar around Doyers). To protect the vulnerable population such as the seniors in the neighborhood from the increasing noise, the noise-reducing windows could be installed by the city.

Stakeholders and community engagement

CPLDC and DOT will be the most important players in the process. CPLDC has local knowledge and social connections in Chinatown while DOT will be in charge of the execution of the proposed project with the approval from the city. DCP will also get engaged because the project will go through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Support from elected officials such as Council Member Chin and Congresswoman Velazquez is crucial for the project because of their political influence in the district.

The New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) provides grants for major improvements of infrastructure and streetscape aiming to rejuvenate the downtown area. This could be a source of funding for the project. Independent of receiving the grant, the city should take financial responsibility for the project to compensate for the burden on the neighborhood exerted by the borough-based jail. The customer loss of Chinatown's businesses due to the jail construction should be mitigated by a major project that attracts more foot traffic to the neighborhood.

With the funds ready for the project, CPLDC, DOT and DCP could propose to Manhattan Community Board 2 and 3 to start a public participation process.

Community organizing group Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) and the neighborhood history project City Lore organized an effective neighborhood identity session in the Essex Crossing project. They should be invited to organize public workshops and conduct surveys and interviews to raise the awareness of the project among the locals and the visitors. Questions could include: 1) what does Chinatown's historic core mean to you; 2) how do you feel about the pedestrianization project; 3) what are your major concerns about the project; and 4) what do you want to see on the pedestrianized Doyers.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and ULURP should be made transparent and understandable for the public. The scoping process of EIA should include a wide range of stakeholders, especially the locals. Considering the large population of seniors who may not be familiar with these processes, workshops on EIA and ULURP should be held for the proposed project. It would be beneficial to the public participation process if they are well-informed and actively engaged.

To avoid the mistake of the former "self-orientalization" attempts that prioritized visitors over the Chinatown locals, the community input should serve as the basis of the making of the plan.

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